GARDENING GLOVES, CLOTHING, SECATEURS & SALAD BOXES worth

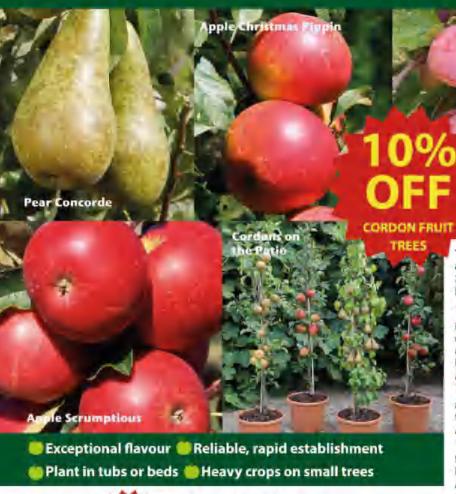
Kitchen



MORTONS

Space Saving Fruit Trees

SCRUMPTIOUS ORCHARD TREES PERFECT FOR ANY SIZED GARDEN OR PATIO





Giant Raspberry

RASPBERRY POLKA - This excellent new autumn fruiting primocane raspberry is a multi-award winner at the National Fruit Show. The fruits are exceptionally large and have a superb aromatic flavour. Very heavy cropping, producing up to double the yield of Autumn Bliss (one of its parents). The canes may not require supporting in sheltered gardens. Polka will commence cropping at least two weeks earlier than Autumn Bliss. Season: mid July - Oct. Plant canes 40cm (16in) apart.

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

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APPLE SCRUMPTIOUS - Early dessert apple named for its wonderful complexity of flavours. Crisp, sweet, rich & aromatic. Heavy cropping & disease resistant. Sultable countrywide. 5F APC014 Usually £23.95 NOW £21.55

PEAR CONCORDE - Excellent late pear suitable for most locations. Large fruits with smooth, Julcy flesh & rich, sweet flavour. Crops heavily and reliably from an early age. Stores very well. SF PECOO1 Usually £22.50 NOW £20.25

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WELCOME



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It seems hard to believe that another season is drawing to an end. So how was it for you? Quite good in my part of the East Midlands. Most things thrived, but one of the things I'd like to improve are my onions. I'll never be able to grow the whoppers we see every year as sponsors of the Heavy Onion Competition at Harrogate Flower Show, but a crop with a reasonable choice of three nice bulbs for the local show would be a start. This month Andrew Tokely reveals his secrets of growing bumper bulbs, whether for the show bench or the kitchen. To get you started you'll find a free pack of classic onion 'Bedfordshire Champion' worth £1.45 with this issue.

If you are looking for crops to grow right now, then don't miss our four-page special feature on growing seed sprouts - the fastest and most nutritious crops of all. We also have the lowdown on growing delicious rhubarb, a crop that can be planted right now and needs very little care and attention for success.

There is some exciting news on new blight resistant spuds and our roundup of the very best new seed varieties for 2016. For readers in Scotland we have a roundup of the best veg from Dundee Flower Show and on page 49 a feature giving you some great tips on growing fruit north of the border.

Steve Ott, editor

Contact me at: sott@mortons.co.uk | 01507 529396 Find us at www.kitchengarden.co.uk Contact subscriptions: 01507 529529

OUR EXPERTS IN THIS ISSUE INCLUDE:



ANNE SWITHINBANK Anne is a regular panellist on Radio 4's Gardeners' Question Time and in this issue, as well as teaming up with Bob Flowerdew to answer your gardening queries, just for a bit of fun she brings us her top 10 ancient pearls of gardening wisdom.



JOHN STOA John is a gardening expert and former grower (famous for his promotion of saskatoons as a fruit crop). He loves to experiment, stretching the boundaries of fruit growing in his garden in Dundee. He reveals his favourites for northern allotments.



JULIE MOORE Biodynamic gardener Julie does her gardening in the French Pyrenees. In this issue she turns her attention to growing mega-healthy seed sprouts all year round and explains how it can be done with nothing more than some packets of seeds and a few jam jars.



GABY BARTAI This month gardening journalist and KG regular Gaby brings us the fruit and veggie highlights from the Dundee Flower and Food Festival where some up-and-coming young growers are starting to make a name for themselves among the prizewinners.



ANNA PETTIGREW In her five-page special feature cookery expert and photographer Anna has lined up some delicious and highly original festive treats to help your Christmas celebrations go with a swing and to ensure your home-grown produce takes centre stage.



TONY FLANAGAN Keen plotter and KG staff writer Tony has been busy on his allotment this month. Tony loves rhubarb and this issue brings you his top tips for growing your best-ever sticks. Plant a crown now and have your pick of the many varieties available

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ON THE COVER



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Kitchen Garden Mag

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Just Ask your local newsagent to reserve you a copy each month

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We are offering the chance to win one of 10 pairs of tickets to the show

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JUBS THIS MONTH

TASKS FOR YOUR PATCH AND UNDER COVER IN DECEMBER



10-MINUTE JOBS FOR DECEMBER

CLEAR SNOW

Should an early snowfall be forecast – be prepared. Even relatively light falls can cause damage to fruit cages and other structures and will reduce light levels inside greenhouses and polytunnels, so remove netting from cages and be prepared to sweep snow from other buildings.

HEEL IN THE HARVEST

Your veg should be at the centre of the festivities, but that's unlikely if it is frozen into the ground! Make sure any root crops such as parsnips and carrots are lifted in good time and if the weather is likely to be very cold lift and heel in some roots close to the house.

TIDY THE SHED

This is a good time to tackle shed tidying. Not only will this allow you to fit in more essentials, but it will make regular forays into the building a pleasure and less hazardous. Anything hung on the walls should be held safely. Make sure the doors and windows are fitted with sturdy locks.

THINK WATER

Don't wait till summer
to install water butts and tanks
to your downpipes, do it now
and you can be sure that the winter
rains will fill them for free.
You may even find that the kit is
a little cheaper at this time of
year. Don't forget to add
a water diverter
over drains.

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SELECT A GARDENING GIFT

There are plenty of essentials that any gardener would just love to receive as a gift at this time of year, ranging from a greenhouse to a pack of plant labels as a stocking filler. We have lots of ideas for you in this issue but if you are still stumped, a pair of secateurs or a gardening knife or scissors are always handy and can be as cheap or expensive as your pocket can afford. Simple sundries are often in short supply such as string, labels, labelling pens and seed trays, and no self-respecting gardener would ever turn down a pair of gardening gloves, welly socks or a subscription to KG!



SOW NOW Salad leaves, exhibition onions, sprouting seeds, microgreens

PLANT NOW Bare-rooted fruit trees and bushes, bare-rooted hedging, rhubarb, garlic

HARVEST NOW Carrots, leeks, winter cabbages, Brussels sprouts, kale, broccoli, chicory, celery/celeriac, spinach, Jerusalem artichokes, endive, kohl rabi, lettuce, salsify and scorzonera, swedes, turnips, parsnips

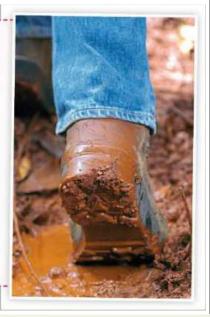
FROM STORE Apples, pears, potatoes (from store), beetroot (from store), onions, pumpkins/squashes

ON THE **VEG PATCH**

AVOID WALKING ON WET SOIL

We spend lots of time trying to improve our soil – not just its fertility, but its structure too, that network of crumbs that allows air and water to permeate to the roots, keeping our crops healthy and vigorous. Walking on wet soil will quickly destroy this delicate structure, whether to harvest winter veg, do a spot of weeding or to get the winter digging done.

It is best to avoid walking on the soil when wet if it can be avoided and digging can wait since you have all winter to get it finished, but if you have to walk on the beds to harvest etc., put down a board or temporary path first. Alternatively, consider splitting your plot into beds (these can be raised or not) no more than 1.2m (4ft) wide and working from the paths.



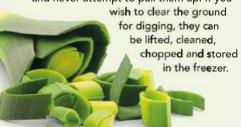
KG TOP TIP

Leeks can be difficult to clean if soil gets in among the flags (leaves) at their base. Cutting the barrel of the leek halfway through down its length makes them much easier to wash.



LEEKS

Leeks will be at their best now and can be harvested as required throughout the winter. Use a garden fork placed beneath the roots to level them out of the ground and never attempt to pull them up. If you



WINTER CABBAGE

The first Savoy and other winter cabbages should be ready for cutting from now onwards. Protect crops until required from hungry pigeons with netting or fleece. Keep netting tight to prevent small birds being caught up. Slugs may be active in mild spells, so continue

to be vigilant and to lightly scatter some wildlife friendly pellets as required.

WINTER LETTUCE

These will be growing slowly under their cloches. Keep an eye on watering and pest control by uncovering weekly and giving them some TLC. They can dry out surprisingly quickly under cover, so water to keep the soil moist around the

Watch for signs of persistent greenfly attacks and signs of root pests such as cutworms.



DECEMBER TASK

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WINTER WASH FRUIT TREES

Several damaging pests such as winter moths lay their eggs on the branches of fruit trees through the autumn and winter and still more, such as red spider mite, lay eggs in cracks and crevices in the bark. These can be dislodged by spraying with a rapeseed oil-based winter wash such as Vitax Winter Tree Wash while the tree is dormant between November and the end of February.



TOP TIP

Mint dies down at this time of year, but if you'd like some for winter use this is a good time to lift some rooted runners or to split a plant, to pot them up and place on a sunny windowsill or in a frost-free place.

INSTALL LIGHTING

The days are shortest this month and you'll want to be outside for as long as possible to make the most of the light. Extend the time you can be outside, plus increase safety and security with some lighting. With improved batteries and LED units, solar-powered lighting is so much more efficient these days and you don't need an electrician to install it safely. Place units above the doors of outbuildings and also inside sheds and greenhouses



PLANT FRUIT TREES DO IT NOW

- This is prime for planting new fruit trees. There will be an excellent selection of bare-rooted trees available right now (see our ads pages) and as soon as your tree arrives unpack it and heel it in while you make final preparations for planting (see KG November). Choose a site which is sunny but sheltered and not in a frost pocket (a place where cold air collects).
- Dig a hole large enough to take the new rootball without bending the roots and deep enough to accommodate them so that the graft is held well clear of the soil when planted. Place a stick over the hole to help you judge this.
- Place a tree stake into the hole, feeding it through the roots so as not to damage them.
- Dust the hole with a mycorrhizal treatment to aid rapid establishment and sprinkle bone meal over the base of the hole and backfill (incorporate the bonemeal so it is not in direct contact with the roots) before refilling gradually with soil, shaking the tree up and down gently to encourage it to fall between the roots.
- Finally, firm well with the feet, water and tie to your stake using a proper tree tie.



- Sort your seed packets either by type of veg or by month of sowing so you don't miss any slots through the season.
- Order soft fruit bushes while the choice is at its widest. Consider replacing old plants which may have become unproductive.
- Cut back the dead growth from herbaceous perennial crops such as some herbs, cardoons and Jerusalem artichokes
- Cover the crowns of herbaceous perennial crops with straw and hold in place with wire mesh or a box.
- Continue prunina bush and tree fruit while still dormant. Shred the chippings for use on paths.
- Where rabbits are a problem consider installing a suitable fence around your plot, burying the bottom 45cm (18in) in the soil. Place guards around the stems of young fruit trees too.



PLANT HEDGES

Hedging offers a great way to define your borders, divide your plot, attract wildlife and maybe even provide a little foraging in the form of hazelnuts, blackberries, sloes and other berries. Mixed hedges use mainly deciduous species such as field maple, beech, hornbeam, wild cherry, blackthorn and hazel. This is a great time to plant bare-rooted hedges and they will establish very quickly. Follow the method for tree planting above, except that it may be quicker and easier to dig a shallow trench twice the width of the rootball and deep enough so that the plants can be buried to the soil mark on the stem. Space your plants from 30-45cm (12-18in) apart depending on size.









TOP TIPS FOR DECEMBER

- ➤ Keep glass or polythene clean so the most can be made of low light levels.
- Water sparingly and try not to splash leaves.
- ➤ Get a range of seed catalogues and make a wish list: this can always be pruned back when it comes to ordering.
- ➤ This is good time to make or repair: paths, the sides of raised beds, shelves, benches etc.
- ➤ Wash pots and containers, so they don't carry disease through to young plants next year.



IN THE GREENHOUSE



WITH JOYCE RUSSELL Pictures by Ben Russell



HEALTHY BEETROOT

Start using beetroot as soon as the 'roots' are large enough. This vegetable can tend to turn tough and stringy if left to stand too long through the winter months. It's always best to eat beetroot young and full of flavour, even if this means getting less bulk from each plant.

Smaller leaves can be used in salads or wilted in the same way as spinach. Larger leaves can be a bit too tough to eat and they may suffer from leaf spot.

A FEW FLOWERS

All gardeners like a few flowers and there's a lot to be said for growing bulbs and early blooms under cover. Plants aren't battered by winter weather, so stems stay upright. It may be enough to visit the greenhouse and look at narcissi, like 'Paperwhite', blooming in December. Or pots can be moved to a location near the house door when buds are about to burst.



SOWING & GROWING TIPS

- December isn't the best month to sow seeds, but a few salad leaves – like rocket and mizuna – are worth a try if you don't have much growing. Cover rows or pots with bubble wrap.
- Seed can rot in cold wet conditions. It's safest to wait for soil temperature to rise above 5°C (41°F), at which point germination and growth are more reliable.
- Don't plant fruit trees into frozen ground (yes, this can happen in a greenhouse in a seriously cold winter). Trees can stay in a pot in a shed until things improve.
- In mild areas, it's worth planting one or two early potatoes in the greenhouse.

PLANT OUT PEAS

- If you sowed peas in pots or trays in October, then now is the time to get them into the ground. Space should free up as tomatoes, peppers etc. are removed and the pea row can become an urgent priority. Plants won't grow fast through the winter months, but they do grow, and plants in pots can become root bound. To give the best chance of the earliest pods, it's time to get peas planted out.
 Dig a trench about 25cm (10in)
- time to get peas planted out.

 Dig a trench about 25cm (10in) deep and half fill this with rotted compost. If the compost is dry, then water it liberally to provide a moisture store for growing plants. Draw soil back over the top of the trench and plant peas into this. Young plants can go in a double row about 15cm (6in) apart. Allow 5cm (2in) between plants in a row.

- If soil is acid, scatter a little hydrated lime over the top; take care not to get any on plant leaves. Slug protection may also be required in a mild winter some beasts can still be active in a greenhouse.
- Plants shouldn't need support just yet, but they will establish much better with a small bit of protection. Wire hoops and some woven crop cover can make a suitable cloche that allows light, air and moisture to gain access.



SOWING & PLANTING GUIDE

	FAVOURITE VARIETIES	HOW TO START
GRAPE VINE	Seedless sweet dessert varieties, unless you intend to grow for wine	Plant outside the structure and train the stem in through a hole.
PEACHES & NECTARINES	'Lord Napier', 'Peregrine'	Choose a well-formed young tree to either plant in border soil or grow in a large pot
STRAWBERRIES	Any early variety	Plant along the edges of beds or bring plants in pots undercover after they have been exposed to a hard frost
SALAD LEAVES	Rocket, mizuna, mibuna, mustard greens	Sow in pots, or directly in drills 1cm (½in) deep, 30cm (12in) apart
BROAD BEANS	'Aquadulce Claudia'	Sow directly where they will grow. 5cm (2in) deep, 15cm (6in) apart, in a double row

STRAWBERRIES

- Growing strawberries in 20cm (8in) pots means that plants can be moved out of the greenhouse when they finish cropping. December is the perfect time to bring plants, and newly rooted runners, back indoors: they should have been exposed to a frost by now, which helps fruiting.
- Remove any discoloured leaves and trim back to a neat centre with a healthy growing point. Tip plants out of pots and knock loose compost from the roots: this allows reporting into the same sized pot, but replenishes nutrients. Use compost rather than manure and add a scatter of potash-rich feed.
- Pots can stand on a layer of manure in the greenhouse border. Plant roots will eventually push through to the manure, but only at the stage when an extra kick is needed and fruit is swelling.



Time to start forcing some strawberries

LAST PEPPERS

Peppers seem to last right through to December and still have fruit on the branches. It's hardly worth cherishing plants beyond this point, and especially if grey mould has started to show itself on stems or if low temperatures have caused leaves to drop.

Pick all last fruit; remove plants, and clear fallen plant material. Try not to carry problems through into 2016.



Harvest the last peppers and clear the plants

TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT

I grew komatsuna for the first time last year and am quite a fan at this point. You can sow seed at any time of year under cover and plants are frost tolerant. Sow a good pinch of seed for every 40cm (16in) of row and you will get a fast crop of tasty salad leaves. Thin plants out to 15cm (6in) apart if you want to grow larger, leafy heads. The taste is fresh and leaves don't seem to turn bitter



Komatsuna is a super salad plant

HOT TOPICS

NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF GROWING YOUR OWN FRUIT AND VEG

PATON PUMPKIN TRIUMPHS AGAIN

Hampshire brothers Ian and Stuart Paton have picked up another giant cheque from Thompson & Morgan at the Autumn Pumpkin Festival, Netley, Southampton in October with their prize-winning pumpkin. Although the twins failed to beat the record they set in 2014, nonetheless, this pumpkin weighed in at a massive 1,861lb.

This year Thompson & Morgan is donating the giant pumpkin to charity World Vision, the world's largest international children's aid charity. It plans to use the pumpkin as part of its annual Carve a Heart campaign. Now in its third year, the event uses Halloween as a hook to highlight children living in fear across the world.

The campaign calls on consumers to turn a night of fear into a night of hope by carving hearts into their pumpkins in place of a scary face, offering a lantern of hope for vulnerable children who live in fear every night of the year.

For more information visit www.worldvision.org.uk/carveaheart



LONDON SCHOOLS' GROWATHON

A new initiative called Growathon has been launched by the Food **Growing Schools:** London partnership (FGSL) with the aim of reaching 10,000 London students by summer 2016. Students from every London borough are being set the challenge to grow one

thing, feed their city, and tell a friend.

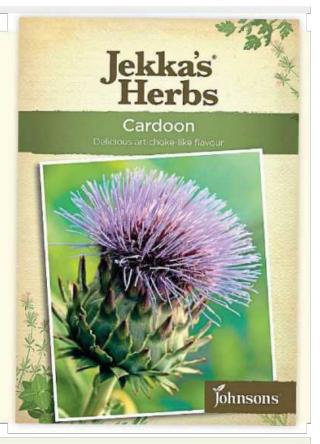
other young people to come along.

From classroom windowsill growers to urban school farms, and schools wishing to try growing food for the first time, every school in London is welcome to get involved. Activities such as workshops, lessons, assemblies, events, class projects and school farm visits will all be included. And schools will be able to advertise public growing events on the website to invite

The new Growathon website enables schools, students and growing organisations to share their food-growing activities. For more information visit: www.growathon.org.uk.

NEW HERB RANGE LAUNCHED

Johnsons Seeds has joined forces with the UK herb expert Jekka McVicar to launch a new range of herb seeds. Jekka selected a new collection of 47 species and varieties of herbs, including both well known 'classics' and some more unusual names. The range is offered in large-format packets, featuring Jekka's own varietal photography on the front and her personal sowing, growing and usage advice on the reverse. Prices start at £2.30 per packet. www.johnsons-seeds.com



DO YOU HAVE SOME HOT STORIES FOR OUR NEWS PAGES? SEND THEM TO TFLANAGAN@MORTONS.CO.UK

CZECH THIS OUT

A brand new garlic which originates close to the Czech city of Pilsen, famous for its beers, has been introduced by mail order kitchen garden specialist D. T. Brown for the 2015-16 growing season. 'Topinky Wight' takes its name from the Czech 'topinky', a popular snack or starter of deep-fried, dense brown bread served with garlic cloves for rubbing over it. Topinky has been enjoyed by generations in the Czech Republic.

'Topinky Wight' is a hardneck garlic and is well suited to planting in late autumn for producing a crop as early as June the following summer. The strong single flower shoots (scapes) they produce in early summer can be removed and eaten before the bulbs are harvested.

www.dtbrownseeds.co.uk



WAKEHURST RIGHT ON KEW

The 500-year-old Wakehurst Estate, in Ardingly, West Sussex is the country estate of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. It is home to Kew's Millennium Seed Bank which houses and protects seed from the world's most substantial and diverse collection of threatened and useful wild plants. The Wakehurst also leads the Millennium Seed Bank partnership, a global science-based conservation programme which is the largest of its kind in the world.

There is plenty to explore with rolling hills, lakes, ornamental gardens, temperate woodlands, a nature reserve, an Elizabethan mansion, activities for children and countryside events throughout the year. For more information visit: www.kew.org/visit-wakehurst



CHEEKY CLOTHING

A charity's clothing range which combines gardening slogans with supporting essential care to disabled and older people has tapped into the popularity in gardening with tongue-in-cheek, pun-based phrases adorning T-shirts, hoodies and mugs. Slogans provide an alternative view of gardening such as: 'Shed (n) typically inhabited by men avoiding jobs' and 'Weeds (n) just plants in the wrong place'.

All money raised from sales will go to the charity's work supporting disabled and older people, their carers and family members. To view the full range visit www.papworthtrust.org.uk/shop



BANBURY HARVEST

Crates of fresh fruit have been donated to those in need in Banbury, thanks to a successful harvest festival-style project.

Harvest Banbury, funded by Sanctuary Housing and led by Banbury Community Action Group, has been able to donate unwanted fruit to local charities, groups and residents by collecting and helping to pick surplus crops.

Donations of fruit came from the local community, Sanctuary Housing staff and Coun John Donaldson. The total weight handed over was in excess of 500kg.

A juicing evening held at The Hill Youth and Community Centre celebrated the end of the project, where some of the harvest was blitzed into healthy and colourful drinks for the community to take home.

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BEE MOVIE

The Maya the Bee movie is now out, raising funds for the Friends of the Honey Bee which supports the work undertaken by the British Beekeepers' Association.

Jane Moseley, the general secretary of the British Beekeepers' Association, said: "Maya



the Bee is a delightful film which introduces the world of the honeybee in an entertaining way. Her adventures with her friends highlight the importance of honeybees and other insects and bring the real world of the honeybee to life."

The film was launched to coincide with National Honey Week, October 25-31, organised to bring greater awareness of the importance of the honeybee to our environment.

To find out where Maya the Bee is being screened near you go to: www.showcasecinemas.co.uk/films/maya-the-bee-movie

MORE BUTTERFLIES PLEASE

Recent Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) polls have revealed that almost two-thirds (65%) of people in the UK would like to see more butterflies in their garden, making them the most commonly desired garden species. Garden birds, such as robins, starlings



and house sparrows, swiftly followed with 62% of people wanting to see more of them, with the top three rounded off by hedgehogs (53%). Through the RSPB's campaign Giving Nature a Home the charity is asking people to provide a place for wildlife in their own gardens and outside space. For more information visit: www.rspb.org.uk/homes.

DID YOU KNOW?

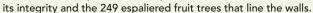
Prior to her worldwide fame as a singer and actress, in 1947 Marilyn Monroe was crowned 'Artichoke Queen' of Castroville, near Monterey in California. Castroville promotes itself as the 'artichoke centre of the world' and even has an artichoke festival each May. The festival celebrates globe artichokes which supposedly have aphrodisiacal properties, as opposed to Jerusalem artichokes which, as



GIFT FOR WALLED GARDEN

The Walled Garden at Gordon Castle, Morayshire, has recently received a pear sculpture measuring 7x4x4 feet donated by award-winning garden designer Arne Maynard. This adds an artistic feature to the castle's ongoing restoration project.

In its heyday in the Victorian and Edwardian eras the garden provided an abundance of fruit, vegetables, cut flowers and herbs for the castle and estate, and employment for many local people. It was laid mainly to raspberries in the 1950s and run as a commercial soft fruit farm during the latter half of the last century. In its best years more than 50 tons of fruit were harvested. Eventually, it became uneconomic and has since been kept on a low maintenance programme to preserve



Work on the restoration programme is now fully under way and the garden aims to become a leading visitor attraction for North East Scotland. For more information go to: www.gordoncastlescotland.com





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CROPPING CUCAMELONS!

I am 83 and have been gardening all my adult life. Last winter I read James Wong's article on cucamelons and my daughter encouraged me to try them. I raised the plants and planted two in my greenhouse with my tomatoes and cucumbers, and they grew profusely among the crops, climbing up the supports. You can see from the photos that they cropped well! They are attractive tiny

cucumbers with a lime flavour. I look forward to receiving my Kitchen Garden each month. Thank you for the tips and information.

Mr R J Salter, Crediton



HAVE YOUR SAY

CONTACT US WITH YOUR LETTERS AND TIPS: TFLANAGAN@MORTONS.CO.UK

ONION PRIZE **SURPRISE**

Annette Mahon wins first prize for her onions! She won this prize at our local horticulture show here in Clondalkin. She has been an avid reader of Kitchen Garden for years and she loves her full organic garden.

Ed Mahon (her loving husband), Dublin



ALLOTMENT PHOENIX

Just thought I'd let you know about a tragedy we had on our plot since you featured my family's allotment in a Last Word piece a few months back. Our shed and greenhouse were set on fire and burnt to the ground. My children were devastated. However, we have grafted very hard and are managing to get things back on track. We have had so much kind support from our fans from our allotment channel and are pleased to say the plot is now looking rather good. If readers would like to see our journey we would love it if they visited www.youtube.com/c/ purplesweetpea206.

Claire Keen, Middlesborough



SEND US YOUR LETTERS - EVERYONE'S A WINNER

Send us your tips and pictures and if your letter is published you will get a £10 Dobies voucher. If you are lucky enough to have yours chosen as our Star Letter you will get a £25 voucher. Your voucher will be sent out with a Dobies catalogue and you can choose to spend your winnings on a fabulous

range of seeds, young plants and gardening sundries. You can get hold of a copy of the catalogue now by phoning 0844 701 7625 or go online to www.dobies.co.uk

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Email your letters to tflanagan@mortons.co.uk or post to Letters, Kitchen Garden, Mortons Media Group, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR





EUREKA MOMENT

I just had to tell you about my Eureka moment this year. For the past three years my young brassica plants have been attacked and eaten by mice and/or voles. Definitely not birds as I grow them under netting. This year I had a load of spare hedging protection tubes so I cut these into short lengths and put them around all my brassicas when I planted them out. It was a bit fiddly but, oh boy, was it well worth the effort. I didn't lose a single plant to the pesky mice. Once the plants had grown out of the end of the tubes I took the tubes away. I thought your readers would like to see a picture of my efforts.





SEAWEED WEEDKILLER

My tip for those who live near the sea is to collect any seaweed on the shore line and to spread it on a third of your plot, after doing your winter digging. The salts will be washed down into the soil and Mother Nature will do the rest. When spring arrives, most if not all of the seaweed will be incorporated into the top few inches of soil. A bonus is that there will be few or no weeds! Crops look greener and healthier and do not seem to get infested with nasty bugs. Always check with the local authority though before removing anything from the shoreline. I now live in South Derbyshire so have to use a seaweed extract.

Brian Jenkin, Derbyshire





SPREADING THE **COFFEE LOVE**

Further to your issue October 2015, we have visited our local Costa Coffee in Banstead, Surrey. To date we have acquired approximately 60kg of coffee grounds and are now visiting twice weekly and spreading it round fruit trees and vegetable beds. We have a large garden and the coffee grounds are a delight to spread and mulch with. We are on chalk soil, hungry ground. Many thanks to the staff at Banstead.

Glen Lee, Surrey

PUT A SOCK ON IT!

My mum always puts pots in when she plants tomatoes in the polytunnel to water and feed the roots, but since finding a small dead shrew in one was worried about other small mammals getting in and not being able to get out. Her solution was cheap and easy. She bought several pairs of very cheap ankle stockings and stretched one over each of the pots. This has worked really well throughout the season and will be used again next year. Cory Mortis-Wait, Machynlleth





ONLINE ★ POST ★ PHONE Subscribe today ON PAGE 32

A PRICKLY BUSINESS

I was interested in the KG article (September issue) about blackberries. I'm Scottish so they are brambles to me. Last year, I asked a friend for a cutting of the wild brambles he has growing in his garden. I told him how to get me a rooted piece – that was to bend a branch over till it touched the ground and then put a stone on it about 6in up from the end. Result? This time last year I planted a perfect little bramble plant in a tub in my fruit cage. It's healthy and I've constantly had to let it know who's boss - no sending out shoots through the netting! In July it was covered in flowers and in October it was covered with ripening fruit.

Catriona Kerr, East Renfrewshire



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Tarden

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SUBSCRIPTION: Full subscription rates (but see page 32 for offer): (12 months 12 issues, inc post and packing) – UK £59.88. Export rates are also available – see page 32 for more details.

UK subscriptions are zero-rated for the purposes of Value Added Tax

DISTRIBUTION

COMAG, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex, UB7 7QE. Tel 01895 433600

PRINTING

William Gibbons & Sons Wolverhampton

PUBLISHED

Monthly by Mortons Media Group Ltd, Media Centre,
Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR.
Tel 01507 523456, Fax 01507 529301

THE TALKING KG

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Kitchen Garden is available on cassette tape at very reasonable rates to anyone unable to read normal type. Details from the Talking Newspaper Association of the UK on 01435 866102.
ISSN 1369-1821

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KG FREE SEEDS BUMPER **HARVEST**

I have been very pleased with the seeds I have grown from lettuces which I am still harvesting, beetroot, pumpkins, squashes and tomatoes.

The pumpkins and squashes have been good although were slow to start - I was only getting male flowers at first but when the weather got better things took off. The tomato 'Ildi' has seen a heavy crop - these are the last.

Veronica Edwards, Essex

TONY SAYS: Wow! What a cracking picture! So pleased that you're enjoying our free seeds, Veronica. I've grown some 'Ildi' myself this year - late cropping but plenty of them!

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE COMPETITION

This month the winner of our competition will receive this aftergardening gift set from Nutscene, containing organic products to soothe hands, muscles and joints. See Garden Store p86.

HOW TO ENTER: Compare pictures

A and B. See if you can spot at least 10 differences. Identify these on picture B with a circle. Complete the coupon below and return your entry by Friday, December 4, 2015. The first correct entry drawn after the closing date will win our prize.



Please enter your details below:

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

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Please return your entries by post to Kitchen Garden, Spot the Difference (December 2015), Mortons Media Group Ltd, PO Box 99, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6LZ.



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QUESTION TIME

GOT A FRUIT OR VEG PROBLEM? ASK KG FOR HELP



BOB FLOWERDEW & ANNE SWITHINBANK

KG EXPERTS & REGULAR **CONTRIBUTORS TO** RADIO 4'S GARDENERS' QUESTION TIME

TOMATOES UNDER ATTACK

The attached photo shows the problem that I had with my tomatoes this year. I lost over 50% of the crop which was annoying as this would have been the heaviest that I have ever grown. They were grown outdoors on the allotment and all the nearby plots have had the same problem. I am assuming that it is some sort of bacterial or fungal attack, and would appreciate any tips to prevent this happening next year. I haven't been able to tie up the look of my tomatoes with any of the illustrations on any of the help websites. Greg Newman, via email

ANNE SAYS: At first glance I thought this was blight but then realised I'd seen the same thing on my own blight-resistant toms this summer. The fruits were brown and rotting but the foliage seemed undamaged. Here in East Devon, the tomato plants floundered in a poor summer and were only ripening decent fruit in early October. I think we can blame the weather, because we had a cold spring, then some fine weather in late spring



and early summer but then a cold wet July and August. This plus the likelihood of blight in a wet part of the country is why I generally grow all my toms under glass (the blight-resistant ones were an experiment). The technical term would be 'corky stylar scar', the stylar being the area at the blossom end of the fruit and the damage starts when flowers are struggling to set at low temperatures. The tissues become damaged at this point and the fruit rots. This was obviously a bad year for it and there's not a lot you can do to avoid the problem. Maybe smaller fruiting tomatoes might set more easily, so throw some cherry varieties into the mix.



LOST **OUINCES**

I have had an allotment for one year now and am still learning. At the beginning of the year I bought a young quince tree and planted it in my allotment which doesn't have much shade. In August I had eight lovely little guinces and by September I had lost each one of them and felt disheartened. I've tried looking on the internet on how to care for a quince tree and it said that quinces were easy to grow. I live in the north of

England and was wondering if it could be the North East weather that guinces don't thrive in, or could it be that it's not in the shade? As I don't have much shade what would be the best advice you can give me for caring for my lovely quince tree.

Lynne Mclachlan, via email

BOB SAYS: I assume as you say tree you mean Cydonia, a white-flowered pear-like quince, not the bushier ornamental reddish-flowered Chaenomeles sort. Quinces are easy to grow and other

than a tendency to mildew suffer few problems. They are self-fertile and can crop even in colder districts because they flower later than many fruits and usually miss frost damage. Now obviously they will do better in a warmer site and I have never heard of them needing shade! The most likely reason they are not holding their fruits is thirst - quinces do not crop well on dry soils and much prefer moist to damp sites. I suggest you apply a thick mulch, and water heavily throughout the growing season.

WRITE IN AND WIN - EVERY LETTER WINS A PRIZE!

The winner of our Star Letter will receive vouchers to the value of £25; the writers of all other letters printed will receive a £10 voucher. Vouchers can be redeemed against any products in the latest Mr Fothergill's

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SPUDS AND SLUGS

My question is about potatoes and slugs. I have had a very bad crop of 'Valor' main crop potatoes. I grow this variety for their resistance to blight, scab and eel worm but my crop has been decimated by slugs. Can you recommend a variety that has the same resistance to all the above? Any advice would be very welcome.

David Saunders, via email

BOB SAYS: I wish I could. Slug resistance is not often given in the descriptions (nor attained in the field). It is possible to find varieties even more susceptible such as 'Cara' and 'Maris Piper'. The renowned horticulturalist Lawrence Hills reckoned 'Estima', 'British Queen' and 'Vanessa' had some slug resistance; however, these do not score highly against the other problems. You will generally find early sorts can



be dug and removed before a slug problem gets damaging; second earlies suffer in wet years and main crops nearly always suffer.

Slug control is possible but expensive if you apply the commercial nematodes. Trapping is cheaper; hollowed-out courgettes, fruits, old potatoes and root vegetables, buttered cabbage leaves and even cat food will all attract slugs and can be policed at night. Just visiting at night with a torch will usually give a good catch. I use strips of carpet between beds to keep in moisture and suppress weeds and these also can be rolled back to reveal many hiding slugs during the day. Slug pubs of beer, milk, fruit juice also trap many. You can also bait a growing crop with chips of old potatoes inserted into the soil nearby (from when the flowers bloom), inspecting twice weekly.

MYSTERY VISITOR

I have this strange plant growing in my courgette bed. It has a single main stem about 3ft high and I have no idea where it came from.

Mervyn Savage, Northumberland

BOB SAYS: This is a *Datura stramonium* (also known as thorn apple or Jimson weed), a noxious weed. The seed pods should be destroyed before they burst and scatter the black seeds. It does have some use: it is extremely competitive for phosphates – scavenging them ruthlessly – thus damaging nearby crops, but if sown thickly and grown lushly then incorporated while still small and before the seeds are formed, the

decaying material increases available phosphates. However, if seeds are formed all benefit is lost.



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SOIL

How can I stop multi-roots on my parsnips? It is a new plot and this is the first year of growing parsnips and only the second year of it being a vegetable patch. I dug in bagged farm manure and 6X compost and the soil looked quite good but the result did not look good at all! Potatoes, runner beans and dwarf beans all did well.

Victor Norris, via email

ANNE SAYS: Growing good carrots and parsnips is not easy unless you have perfect soil for them but let's start with the manure. Look up the growing of roots and you'll always be told to opt for a bed of rich, light soil, free from stones and flints and, crucially, one that was manured for the previous growing season. Newly manured soil is well known for causing forking but you can add a generalpurpose fertiliser prior to sowing. My dad also used to swear by sowing them into



soil that had been limed the previous autumn, or maybe the autumn before that, though you wouldn't do this if your soil was naturally alkaline. My garden soil is basically clay with flints, so I have to choose my bed carefully as some areas of the kitchen garden have better soil than others. Forking will occur if the roots hit stones or lumps of clay too solid to penetrate. I keep meaning to create some raised beds, so I can fill them with lighter soil and make life a bit easier for these fussy roots.

WHY DID MY CARROTS GO CURLY?

Owing to the dreadful spring and summer in this part of the world my carrots were not growing very well, so for the first time ever I bought some carrot plug plants from a large reputable garden centre. There was no variety label on them, just 'carrots'. They grew very well. Unfortunately, when I harvested them they were all fat and short with multitwisted fingers and were not



viable to use. Can you tell me what went wrong as they were grown in a raised bed with no stones to split them? The ones I sowed myself were fine.

Aileen Glennie, Aberdeenshire

ANNE SAYS: I am not a great fan of raising root crops like carrots in pots because observation and timing has to be spot on. With carrots, several seeds are usually sown per pot so they'll develop as a small clump. It must be hard for a garden centre to monitor this and I imagine the roots had begun to circle the pot. You could have sown at home into the longer sort of 9cm pots placed in an unheated greenhouse or cold frame where it would be easy to keep an eye on root development. However, you have a raised bed. Why not make a plastic covered 'lid' to fit over the bed? Then you can warm the soil for direct sowings and keep the cover on to protect the seedlings from wet. Propping up one side would provide ventilation should the sun come out.

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KG PASSIONATE PLOTTER **COMPETITION 2015**

In spring we launched a unique competition to find the most passionate plotters among our readership. Here we can reveal the winners

are the winners!

e had a wonderful response to our Passionate Plotter competition and it has been very difficult to judge as clearly everyone who sent in an entry was passionate about their plot. After a great deal of deliberation we have finally chosen our winners and here they are. We will also be including as many other entries as we can over the next few months because as passionate plotters all are deserving of being featured in the magazine.

1ST BRIAN AND MARGARET JENNER **FROM LEEDS**

Brian and Margaret took over their plot in 2005. It had been Margaret's father's plot and two thirds of it was covered in strawberries, but they now grow an assortment of veg.

WHAT THE JUDGES THOUGHT

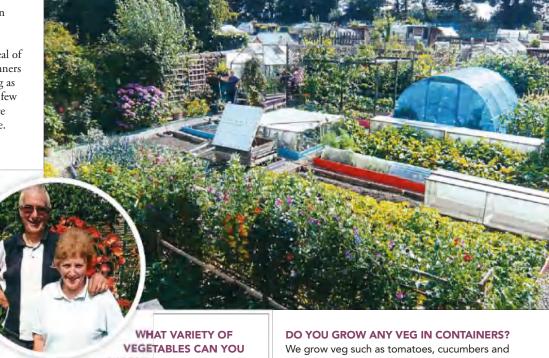
Margaret and Brian grow a huge variety of crops and flowers on their plot and not only cater for their own needs but also the local wildlife with many little projects to house and feed them.

THE PLOT

The allotment is 420sq yds and has two greenhouses and two walk-in Wonder World tunnels. The plot is divided up into nine separate beds which have been colourfully edged. Brian has created a rooftop garden on his shed and a pond to attract the frogs and a number of butterfly homes, bird boxes and a hedgehog house. He has also installed a water collection system that enables them to collect sufficient water to water all the plants only with rainwater. Brian said: "My aim has been to make the plot a delight to look at, for anyone passing by, as well as a home for wildlife and a place to grow my plants and vegetables."

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN GROWING VEG?

We have been growing vegetables for about 10 years and now that we are retired we are trying lots of different varieties of veg. We have experimented with growing lots of different veg such as sweetcorn, kale, kohl rabi, beans, peas, chilli, cucumber, tomatoes and artichokes.



RECOMMEND?

A large number of the vegetables we grow are great for freezing and taste as lovely fresh or thawed. We have found that homegrown peas are wonderful when fresh and the best for freezing. The grandchildren enjoy picking the peas and often eat more than they put in the bags. It is the only veg we don't give any surplus away

peppers in containers in a mixture of our own compost (riddled), multi-purpose compost, Q4 fertiliser and potash with great success. We have grown in deep raised beds carrots and parsnips. These are growing in a mixture of silver sand, peat, calcified seaweed and Q4.



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PASSIONATE PLOTTER







WINS

- Harrod Fruit cage worth £750
- WOLF-Garten vouchers worth £500
- Organic Gardening Catalogue voucher worth £250
- Suttons Veg Crates worth £138

HOW DO YOU GROW ONE PARTICULAR NAMED CROP FROM SOWING TO HARVEST?

Peas. We dig the ground well in autumn and add my own riddled compost. I then leave it till spring and add Super Dug compost (chicken), Q4 fertiliser and rock dust. We work these all together with a Mantis tiller, then rake to level. I then cover one row with the cloches to warm the soil. Approximately two weeks later I remove the cloches and take out a trench about 6in wide and two inches deep. I water the trough thoroughly and sow the peas then cover with soil and recover with the cloches. After two or three weeks seedlings should be large enough for cloches to be removed and placed over the next row.

WHY ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT YOUR PLOT?

Originally we kept the allotment going for sentimental reasons but over the years we have both grown to love the outside, exercise, fresh air and the wildlife that we encourage to the plot. But mostly we take great pleasure in bringing on from seed.

2ND BILL BOWERING NEAR NEWPORT, SHROPSHIRE

Bill, who is 80, started allotment growing after retiring. He had been doing a few odd jobs and mowing his lawns but soon got bored so he started to help his mate Ray with his allotment. Bill started to get really keen and was asking Ray if he could do even more with the plot. In 2009 Ray was confined to a wheelchair so Bill got even more involved all under Ray's guidance. Ray passed away in 2012 and Bill continued to tend the plot as the rent had been paid. Bill had been on the allotment waiting list for four years and as luck would have it his name came to the top at just the right time which meant he could continue working the plot he had tended with Ray.

"I spend a lot of time on the allotment and hardly miss a day," said Bill. "Some allotmenteers ask me if I live here. What is most satisfying is starting with a blank canvas and after a couple of months seeing a full plot."

WHAT THE JUDGES THOUGHT

Bill spends a lot of time on his plot so he is clearly passionate about it and it shows in the quality of the produce he produces. He takes veg growing to another level and has been very creative in using recycled materials.

THE PLOT

Bill's plot is split into two sections each 18 yards by four yards. His favourite crops are carrots and peas. He grows most of the crops in the open ground and only uses containers for cuttings such as gooseberries and red and black currants.

HOW DO YOU GROW ONE NAMED CROP?

Parsnips. I start by laying seed on a damp tissue paper in a clear plastic container. As soon as they germinate I transfer to toilet rolls filled with compost. This way I can set them out on the plot evenly.





WINS

- Harrod Walk-in Fruit/Veg cage worth £450
- WOLF-Garten vouchers worth £300
- Organic Gardening Catalogue voucher worth £150
- Suttons Veg Crates worth £74



3RD MIKE BAKER FROM HAYLING ISLAND, HAMPSHIRE

Mike has been growing veg for four years and the remarkable aspect of his plot is he grows all of his veg in containers – 118 of them to be precise, which sit next to his garage and down the side of his house. One of his successes this year was his potato crop, grown in 16 bags all filled with multi-purpose compost and fed with Tomorite liquid fertiliser.

"I grow as much as I can in the very limited space that I have," said Mike.

WHAT THE JUDGES THOUGHT

Growing such a huge variety of veg all in containers takes a lot of dedication and is inspirational to others who don't have an allotment or even a small patch of earth in which to grow veg. Mike shows us we can grow pretty much anything in a pot. It is also a great achievement for Mike considering the health issues he has had to overcome.

THE PLOT

Mike's 'veg plot' is all at the side of his garage. He grows a variety of crops in his containers including lettuce, sweetcorn, onions, radish, broad beans, runner and French beans, tomatoes and beetroot to name a few.

HOW DO YOU GROW SOME OF YOUR CROPS?

I plant onion sets and potatoes in the autumn plus broad beans and garlic. My main crop is tomatoes. After Christmas I sow the seed in my propagator. I sow 'Alicante' and 'Moneymaker'. When they are 2in high I transfer them to 3in pots and put in the greenhouse. I use an oil heater for the colder months.

WHY ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT YOUR PLOT?

I lost the mobility in my knees in 2010 and had to give up my hobbies of golf and sailing. Matters deteriorated and I had open-heart surgery and bladder cancer so I asked for my birthday present a 12-month subscription to *Kitchen Garden* magazine. Most of my success has been by following the advice in the magazine. Working on my small plot has kept me fit and got me through two years of surgery.

WINS

- Harrod Fruit cage worth £300
- WOLF-Garten vouchers worth £200
- Organic Gardening Catalogue voucher worth £100
- Suttons Veg Crates worth £54







RUNNER-UP: TOM TURNER

We had to give a special runner-up award to Tom who at 13 shows a real dedication to his gardening. He has a goodsized veg plot, eight raised beds and one greenhouse and some fruit.

He hasn't been growing veg that long and gets some good advice from his neighbour who has been growing veg for years.

WHAT VEG CAN YOU RECOMMEND?

Carrots 'Early Nantes 2' because they are always very good at producing an early crop in the year. Also I am big fan of climbing bean 'Matilda'. It has done really well this year producing a heap of beans.

DO YOU GROW VEG IN CONTAINERS?

I grow my tomatoes in pots sowing them in March in John Innes seed compost and placing on a warm windowsill. They are potted up and placed in the greenhouse but they are sometimes taken into the house if frosts are forecast.

HOW DO YOU GROW ONE PARTICULAR CROP?

This is how I produce perfectly straight carrots. I prepare the ground with a fork and rake well and remove as many stones as possible. I make the seed drills and water then place the seed making sure any little stones are removed underneath them. The seed is covered and I water lightly. I make a 60cm barrier around the crop to help prevent carrot fly.

WHY ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT YOUR PLOT?

I enjoy growing fruit and vegetables and being able to taste the difference from shop bought.
Also I enjoy gardening after a long day at school. I find it relaxing and I enjoy watching things grow and

ripen. I like trying new things each year and try to make my fruit and veg better and I enjoy working with nature and not against it.





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ANNE'S CONTROLL OF THE POPULAR SAYINGS RELATED TO GARDENING

The wisdom of times long gone is often handed down by word of mouth through sayings and proverbs. Here are some of **Anne Swithinbank's** favourites

or this, my last Top Ten in the series, I've collected together some sayings or proverbs containing comments or messages to help out with gardening. My gran used to pepper her conversation with these, mostly as admonishments to herself or those around her. These quaint sayings are being lost from ordinary conversations but I think they deserve a revival. As you rush around your plots in the coming growing season, mutter a few under your breath and you won't go far wrong.

ONE YEAR'S SEEDING MEANS SEVEN YEARS' WEEDING'

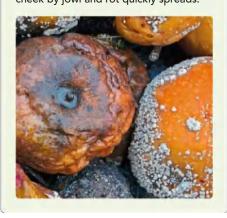
A general failure to hoe, pull up or even lop the heads from weeds means their innumerable seeds enter your soil and compost heaps. They'll resurface for years to come, smothering the ground with speedwell, chickweed and fat hen.





3 'ONE BAD APPLE SPOILS THE WHOLE BARREL'

Although this could have a more general application, it is literally true. Now's a good time to check apples, onions and potatoes in storage, as these crops sit cheek by jowl and rot quickly spreads.





help keep your crops healthy.

5 'BETTER BELLY BUST THAN GOOD FOOD WASTE'

Having provided for her family through the Second World War, this was one of gran's favourites and a call to save waste. Like her, I love to store, bottle, jam and freeze excess produce and recycle leftovers into the next day's dishes.



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'RAIN BEFORE SEVEN, FINE BY ELEVEN'

A local farmer is always saying this, usually while staring at the sky. Keeping an eye to the weather helps when hardening plants off. In spring, I like to sow peas before rain so their seeds swell and germinate.



(e a dog at THE FAIR' Gran would use this the most

'IN AND OUT

when children were running in and out but it could also describe a badly organised gardener. Try to gather everything needed for a job to save criss-crossing between house, shed and beds.



'DON'T LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH'

Actually, do. Gifted plants often bring pests with them. Clubroot can arrive on brassica roots and I've seen white rot on supermarket onions (don't compost their peelings). Pernicious weeds regularly hitch lifts on barerooted fruit plants.



This was one of my dad's sayings and a plea for attention to detail. He issued it most when we were cleaning something. It also works very well when painting sheds, making compost heaps and straightening soil beds.



'21 DAYS TO MAKE A HABIT, 21 DAYS TO BREAK IT'

After work, tools should be cleaned and put away, empty pots gathered up, paths swept, barrows parked so they don't collect water, seeds returned to their tins and buckets upturned. Do I do all this? Not telling.

EXPERT'S CHOICE

I asked Nigel Rees who hosts the popular and long-running quiz show 'Quote....Unquote' on Radio 4 for his favourite saying but he could not resist this quote from Abraham Cowley, English poet and essayist (1618-67).

"I never had any other Desire so Strong and so like to Covetousness, as that one which I have had always, that I might be Master at last of a small House and large Garden, with very moderate Conveniences joined to them, and there dedicate the Remainder of my Life to the Culture of them, and study of nature."

This introduction to the poem The Garden (1664) was dedicated to the diarist John Evelyn, and Nigel was keen to point out that in this instance 'Conveniences' has the meaning 'material arrangements conducive to ease of action or saving of trouble' rather than the modern one. Either

way, it sounds like bliss to me.

For a saying, he suggested I peruse his book More Tea, Vicar? In it I found 'Every time a sheep bleats, it loses a nibble'. This is a reminder that opportunities can be missed while too much chatter is going on and urges us to concentrate on our gardening and avoid too much



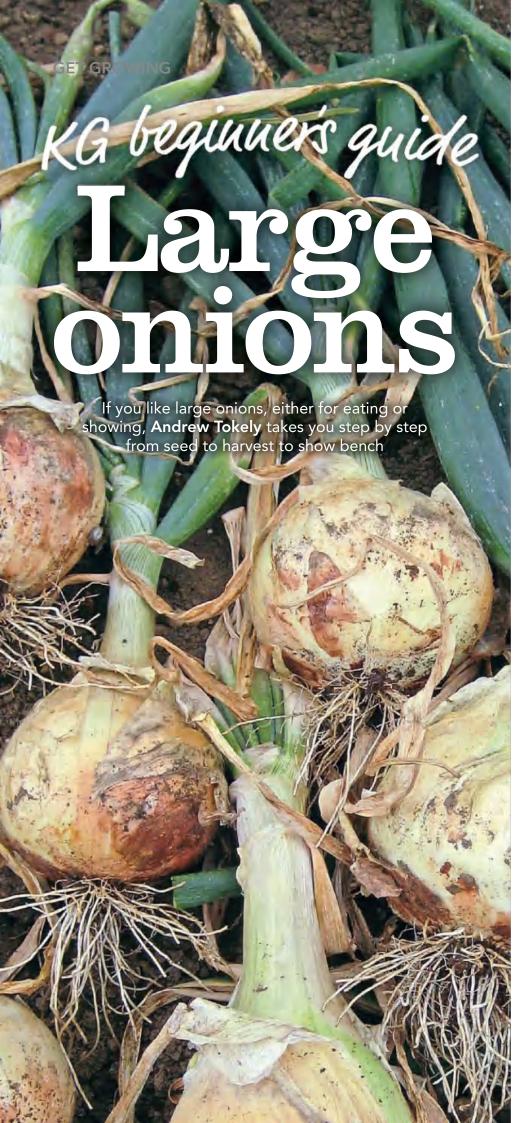
distraction. I also liked 'All

over the place like a mad

woman's underclothes',



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Sow onion seeds lightly and evenly

Ithough large onions are often grown and used on the show bench they are also a useful addition to the vegetable plot. They might grow into large specimens but have a sweet mild flavour, ideal for slicing in a salad or adding as whole onion rings to a freshly cooked burger. I have grown large onions for more than 30 years and still get great enjoyment from seeing these impressive plants grow into whoppers on my plot. In those 30 years I have also exhibited many matching sets of various varieties at local shows in the area with reasonable success.

HOW TO SOW

Large onions require a long growing season to achieve a good size so are one of the first crops to be sown under glass, which usually starts on Christmas Day or Boxing Day but can be delayed until mid-January and still get good results. Sow seeds into seed trays filled with a moist seed-sowing compost. Once the trays are filled lightly firm them in using a flat wooden tamper to gently compress the compost. This leaves a small rim around the top of the tray, making a space to sow the seeds. Before sowing the seed the trays should be watered with tap water using a fine rose on your watering can and left to drain for approximately half an hour. Sow the seed evenly over the seed tray of compost and then lightly cover with a layer of fine grade vermiculite. Place the seed trays in a heated propagator at 18-20°C (65-68°F). Germination will start between seven to 14 days.

MANAGING THE SEEDLINGS

Once the seedlings start to germinate gradually acclimatise them to the greenhouse temperature they will be growing in, which at this time of year is a minimum of 10-13°C (50-55°F). The best way of acclimatising seedlings is to remove the top of the propagator once the seedlings have germinated. This way the seedlings will get used



Leave the seed case on the seedlings if still attached

LARGE ONIONS AT A GLANCE

	Sow	Harvest	
Jan			
Feb			
Mar			
Apr			
May			
Jun			
Jul			
Aug			
Sep			
Oct			
Nov			
Dec			

	V	-

Water trays before pricking out seedlings

to having the cooler air temperature from the greenhouse, but also benefit from the warmth from the bottom of the propagator. Leave the seedlings two or three days like this then move

seedlings are just past the loop stage. If you leave them until the seedling is standing upright, the root can often be too long, and you may damage this when pricking out which will then cause a check to the seedlings' growth. It is not uncommon to find that some of the seedlings still have the seed case attached to the top of the seedling. Do not remove this as you may damage the seedling - it is believed that the seedling is still taking some goodness from the seed which is why it is still attached. This seed coat will naturally fall off once the seedling has finished with it.

them to the greenhouse benching for a day before pricking them out (transplanting them) into trays. The best time to start pricking out is when the

lf your plot is quite exposed, put up a netting wind break round the onion plot to give some wind protection

Large onion seedlings in March

Onion bed second week of July

PRICKING OUT

Prick out into cell trays filled with a good multi-purpose compost. Water the cell trays before the seedlings are pricked out into them as this will help the seedlings get away better, and there is less chance of disturbance which can occur when pricking out into dry compost and watering afterwards.

Grow the seedling on in the greenhouse throughout the winter and early spring, maintaining a minimum temperature of 10-13°C (50-55°F).

From mid-March or early April, depending on the weather, move the young onion plants into the cold frame to gradually harden them off before planting. By early May

the plants are ready for planting into the vegetable plot and are usually about the thickness of a pencil by now.

GROUND **PREPARATION**

Dig the onion plot in autumn, adding plenty of well-rotted farmyard manure or home-made compost as onions require a rich, fertile soil. It is possible to grow large onions on the same ground for a number of years with good results providing a high level of organic matter is maintained. And remember this can only be done if the plot remains clear from fungal diseases like white rot.

In the spring work the soil into a fine, crumbly texture, removing any sharp or large stones. Add a dressing of Vitax Q4 fertiliser raked into the surface before planting.

GROWING ON

If room allows it is best to plant these onions out 45cm (18in) apart between the plants and 45-60cm (18-24in) between the rows. This gives the plants as much room as possible to grow into good-sized bulbs. If you wish, plant a row of lettuce or sow a row of radish in between the rows as a catch crop, making use of this extra space while the onions are getting established.

Approximately three weeks after planting feed the onions with a sprinkle of a high-nitrogen fertiliser, such as 6X Natural Fertiliser. Simply sprinkle a little around each plant and hoe it into the surface.

In early July give them another feed, but only if the onions give an indication they require this extra food. Onions can tell you if they have enough nitrogen as the leaves will take up a crinkled appearance, almost looking as if someone has made a series of thumb indents up the leaf. When this is seen no further feeding is required. Knowing how they are growing is

ANDREW'S FAVOURITE VARIETIES



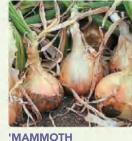
'GLOBO'
Large, straw-coloured
bulbs that are
surprisingly uniform
and keep well, proving
successful on the show
bench. (Kings Seeds,
Suttons, D T Brown)



'BUNTON'S
SHOWSTOPPER'
A quality exhibition
onion for the local show,
selected by Essex amateur
enthusiast Ken Bunton.
(Thompson & Morgan,
Suttons, D T Brown)



'KELSAE'
Once the world record
holder so capable of
growing into a whopper,
producing slightly higher
shouldered bulbs of good
size and flavour. (Mr
Fothergill's, D T Brown)



IMPROVED¹
Capable of growing into a good-sized globe shape onion over 2.5kg (5½lb) in size. A mild flavoured, sweet tasting onion. (Robinson's)



'MAMMOTH RED'
The largest red onion around, with goodsized bulbs and a touch of colour when added raw to salad. It has an excellent, strong flavour. (Robinson's)

important as too much feed will result in split or soft onions that do not keep very well.

Throughout the growing season the onion plot should be kept clean from weeds, though be careful not to damage any of the onions. Watering is only necessary during very dry weather. If this is required, try to keep this off the foliage as this may encourage mildew disease.

Onions naturally start to bulb up after the longest day (June 21). You can almost watch them grow at this time of year. By mid-July these onions can quite easily weigh as much as 500-680g (1-1½lb) and by the middle of August or early September they could be between 1.3kg (2½lb) and 1.8kg (4lb), or even larger if you are trying to grow a whopper.

HARVESTING

Large onions should be ready for harvesting from mid-August till early September. Lift bulbs as soon as the foliage starts to bend down. Large onions should not be left in the ground until all the foliage dies down as this can affect the keeping qualities of the bulbs.

Once lifted, trim the foliage, leaving a neck of 10-15cm (4-6in) long, then rub off any soil and lay in open trays in an airy shed until required. Stored in this way and by using the largest bulbs first, it is possible to keep these onions well past the middle of February.

FOR THE SHOW BENCH

Your show onions require a lovely golden brown skin. To achieve this, lift as above 21-28 days before the show. Clean them down to one clear skin, wash off the membrane and dry with a soft cloth. Dust the skins with talcum powder, gently rubbing it to help the onion to dry out evenly. Place the bulbs in a dry, airy shed and the skins will turn a golden brown colour. Before exhibiting wash off the powder and then trim and tie the necks before setting up a matching set on a black cloth. Then just sit back and hope that your exhibit catches the judge's eye and wins that coveted red card



PESTS & DISEASES

One of the main diseases is downy mildew which is difficult to control. The symptoms of the disease are grey patches on the leaves that can turn a pale purple colour as the disease takes. The leaves will topple over and collapse. Remove the foliage immediately and use those onions first in the kitchen.

White rot is a soil-borne fungal disease that attacks the base of onions. A greyish-white growth appears at the very base of the onion. The only method of control for this disease is to lift the infected onions and dispose of in the dustbin. Onions (or onion family) should not be grown in this part of the garden for 5-10 years.



Onions affected by downy mildew

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- 9. Chard 'White Silver'
- 10. Celery 'Green Sleeves'

- 11. Cucumber 'Chinese Slangen'
- 12. Mixed Salad Leaves
- 13. Lettuce 'Salad Bowl'
- 14. Pepper 'Cayenne Hot'
- 15. Pepper 'Cali Wonder Sweet'
- 16. Radish 'Scarlet Globe'
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A BRASSICA BARRAGE

If you love Brussels sprouts but find it difficult to convince the rest of the family to eat them, 'Brodie' could hold the answer. Hailed as one of the sweetest-tasting sprouts around, this one will be in full swing at just the right time for your Christmas dinner (T&M, Kings, Mr Fothergill's £2.45, £3.45).

Prefer an organic option? Then Brussels sprout 'Groninger' could be for you, the seeds being organically grown. High yielding and weather tolerant. Traditional Dutch variety for crops from autumn into winter. (Johnsons, £2.80)

Broccoli is a tasty superveg that should be on everyone's menu. Broccoli 'Bellaverde Sibsey' is a sweet stem type, popular in the shops, that should provide up to three pickings from May to October depending on when sown. (T&M, Suttons, £2.99, £3.49)

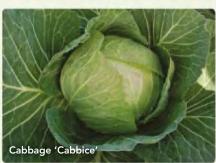
Caulis aren't the easiest of brassicas to grow, but naturally vigorous 'Boris F1' could be easier than most. Said to be tolerant of a range of soils and with strong roots and upright foliage, it is also highly weather resistant.(T&M, £2.99).

A cabbage isn't just for boiling – it can be made into delicious coleslaw and 'Cabbice F1' (or 'Cabice F1' depending on which catalogue you are looking at) is said to be perfect for the job. Crunchy and super sweet. (T&M, £1.99)

Cabbage 'Sabrosa F1' is a Savoy type that forms a heart while still young. It can therefore be cut as a mini cabbage or allowed to mature. (Kings Seeds, £1.95)

Chinese cabbage is a tasty alternative to traditional cabbage varieties and can be harvested in late summer and into the autumn. 'Natsuki F1' can be used young as a salad ingredient, used in stir-fries or when mature boiled as Savoy. (Suttons, £2.99)







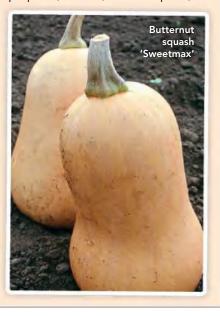




COMPACT SQUASHES

Marrow 'Babymax F1' is a modern variety bred in the UK and produces small marrows which are more convenient in the kitchen than the usual whoppers. Matures rapidly and has excellent flavour. Compact plants, so ideal for the smaller veg patch. (Johnsons, £2.40)

UK-bred butternut squash 'Sweetmax' is new from Marshalls as young plants. Described as early fruiting, this gives lots of time for the fruits to ripen in the British summer. Expect three fruits of 3kg each per plant. (Marshalls, £5.95 for 3 plants).



PEAS BY THE PODFUL

Exclusive to T&M is new compact-growing pea 'Terrain'. Said to have good resistance to both downy and powdery mildew, 'Terrain' is ideal for sowing in small batches for a succession of harvests, especially says T&M, between June and July.

In its own trials a late sowing was made on July 30

and cropped from October 21 to November 11 when a frost finished them off.

Height to 1.2m (4ft), and often producing two pods per leaf joint. (T&M 99p).

Mangetouts are very popular for their sweet flavour and tender pods. New to T&M, mangetout 'Sweet Horizon' is also great when picked young and used raw in salads.

This heat-tolerant variety

will crop well all summer and has great resistance to powdery mildew – an advantage for late summer sowings. (T&M £2.99)

Pea 'Nairobi' is a snap pea which produces high yields of stringless sweet and crunchy pods. Shows excellent tolerance to powdery mildew.

Good source of vitamin C, K and A. (Mr Fothergill's,£2.65) ➤



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SALAD SURPRISES

Turnips generally come either as salad types or maincrops – you'll guess from its name what category our first new introduction falls into. The white flesh of 'Salad Delight' is said to be succulent and can be grated into salads, while the tops may be steamed and eaten as a spinach substitute. (T&M £1.99)

Lettuces can be grown all year round if you choose the right varieties, but all tend to suffer in the summer when temperatures rise, suffering from growth checks and tip burn which lowers the quality of the leaves. 'Warpath' is a cross between iceberg and cos types; it can be harvested from July to September, maturing in 75 days. (T&M 99p)

Crosses between lettuce types are the latest thing in an effort to combine the best features of both parents so expect to see many more in the catalogues in the coming years. One of the vanguards is 'Cosberg Sweet Success F1'. This cos/iceberg cross produces the cupped shape of the cos and crunch of an iceberg. This together with its tolerance to heat makes it ideal for filling with warm foods such as potatoes. Harvest from April to October. (Suttons, £1.99).









Radishes are great for adding colour and a touch of heat to a green salad. Radish 'Mars F1' produces bright red roots which are billed as uniform, mild and crisp. Sow outside or under cover for early crops. (T&M £1.99).

Rocket has become a popular salad leaf in recent years and is well-known for its peppery taste. The new and exclusive 'Wasabi Rocket' from the US has a definite hint of wasabi – the root used to add heat to so many oriental dishes. Quick and easy to grow, it can be sown in succession for much of the year in trays and pots (it is not winter hardy so sow inside in the colder months). Be warned: the older the plants, the hotter the leaves. (T&M 99p).

Rocket 'Astra' is being listed by a couple of seed companies as a replacement for the popular 'Skyrocket'. 'Astra' is said to be fast-growing and reliable even under poor soil conditions. (Kings, T&M, £1.50, £2.69)



Cucumber 'Greenfit F1' is an all-female greenhouse type producing long, straight fruits that make it great for slicing, but also for the showbench. (Dobies, Suttons, £2.49, £3.99).

Peppers both sweet and hot are ever popular. Sweet peppers can be rather less fruitful in our climate than their hotter cousins, but new 'Midas', a cross between both types, is said to be as heavy cropping as any hot pepper. Mild flavour, UK bred. (Suttons £3.49)

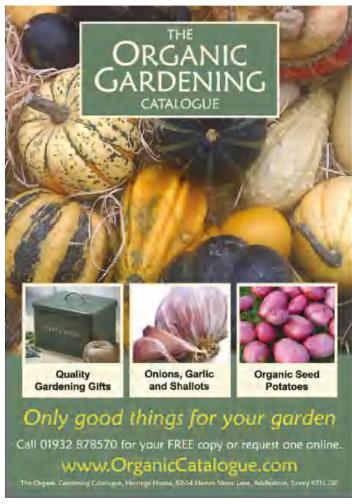
If you love celery to give your salads that lovely crunch try 'Titmus', a UK-bred variety with good taste and smooth green stems. Good resistance to disease and bolting for a longer harvest period. (Johnsons, £2.10)





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EDIBLE ORNAMENTALS

Fuchsia enthusiasts know that many varieties produce dark, edible berries that have been used for many years to make tasty jams and preserves. T&M has selected a variety which it says has the best edible berries of all. 'Fuchsia Berry' produces typical red and purple blooms each of which gives rise to a succulent berry. (T&M five for £9.99, 10 for £17.99).

Two new and exclusive kales can be found in the catalogue of T&M this year - 'Emerald Isle' and 'Midnight Sun'. These ornamental-edible kales are best eaten while still quite young (described as 'teen leaf'), or allowed to reach maturity and grown as ornamental plants. (T&M £2.99).



FULL OF BEANS

We all love beans and few plots are without a row of runners or some dwarf or climbing French varieties. Runners remain our favourites, but needing support they can be more difficult to grow, especially in small spaces. 'Jackpot Mix' contains a mixture of runner bean x dwarf French bean hybrids which are said to produce big yields of runner bean-sized pods on compact, self-fertile plants. (Suttons, £2.99)

Dwarf French beans are really prolific and great freezer fillers that can be relied upon even in a poor summer. 'Compass' produces very fine pods in great numbers and can be harvested from May to September. (Suttons, £2.99).



FRUITY DELIGHTS

Strawberries are the UK's favourite fruit and there are increasing varieties to choose from that can be raised quickly and cheaply from seeds. 'Temptation F1' from Dobies is said to be ideal for container growing and is an everbearing type. This means it will produce a steady flow of fruit right through the summer (Dobies, Suttons, £2.49, £2.99)



SPREADING THE HARVEST

It may seem crazy but until recently EU regulations prevented seed companies from mixing different varieties of the same crop in one seed packet. "Why would they want to?" you might ask. Well, because this allows them to supply three or four varieties chosen to provide a succession of cropping. Sounds like a great idea and T&M will launch six mixtures this year, available from garden centres, to see if customers agree. The mixtures include sweetcorn, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, leeks, mangetout peas and cabbages. (T&M from £2.99).



ROOTS TO A GREAT VARIETY

When it comes to carrots, orange roots are so yesterday. 'Creampak F1' produces slender creamy white roots which are described as having a sweet taste that is delicious raw or cooked. Ready to harvest in 63 days. (Suttons, Dobies, from £2.19). In a similar vein you can also buy a packet of carrot 'Crème de Lite', plus contrasting purple-rooted 'Purple Sun' as part of James Wong's Grow For Flavour range (Suttons

Still prefer them orange? For a good stump rooted variety try Carrot 'Norfolk F1',described as having exceptional flavour and good resistance to cavity spot. (Mr Fothergill's, £2.80)

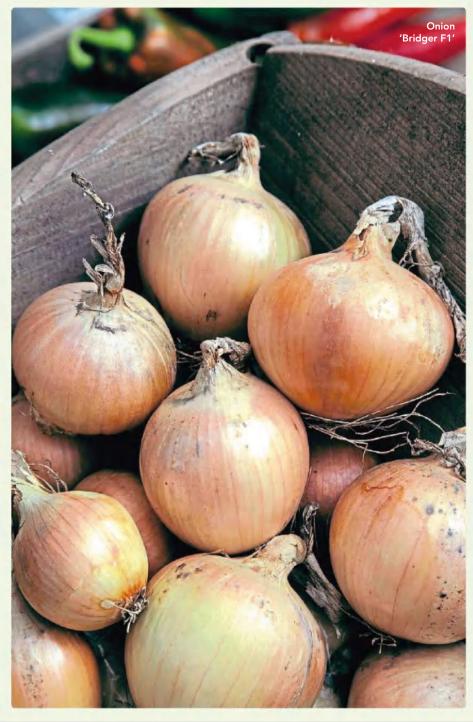
NEW ONIONS AND GARLIC

One of the most versatile crops in the kitchen, onions are a year-round staple. 'Bridger F1' is a Japanese overwintering onion with thick, golden skins which resist splitting. The flattened bulbs are attractive and ideal for the showbench as well as the kitchen (Suttons, Exhibition Seeds £3.49, £4)

W Robinson & Son has been synonymous with supplying top quality veg seeds for many years and has expanded its range for 2016. Its new introductions include one of its specialities, onions. 'Rose of Roscoff' is described as a fine flavoured onion, a heritage Breton onion from France. Easy to grow and stores well. Supplied as sets. (Robinson's £7.50 for 250g)

Who doesn't love the taste of garlic bread? Well new variety 'Topinky Wight' is just the thing – according to suppliers D T Brown, Topinky is the Czech name for toasted garlic bread (see more in our Hot Topics news, page 13). The flavour is described as strong and spicy and it is a good keeper. (D T Brown, £6.95 for 2 bulbs)





NEW BAKER AND BOILER

Potato fans might like to try a new second early variety 'Constance'. Described as easy to grow, the large, oval tubers have a smooth texture and buttery taste. It is said to have good blight resistance too. (Marshalls, £4.95 for 2kg)



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KINGS: www.kingsseeds.com

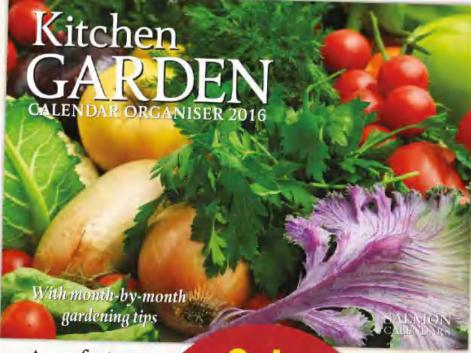
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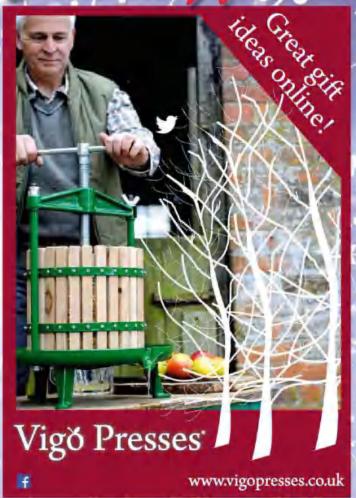
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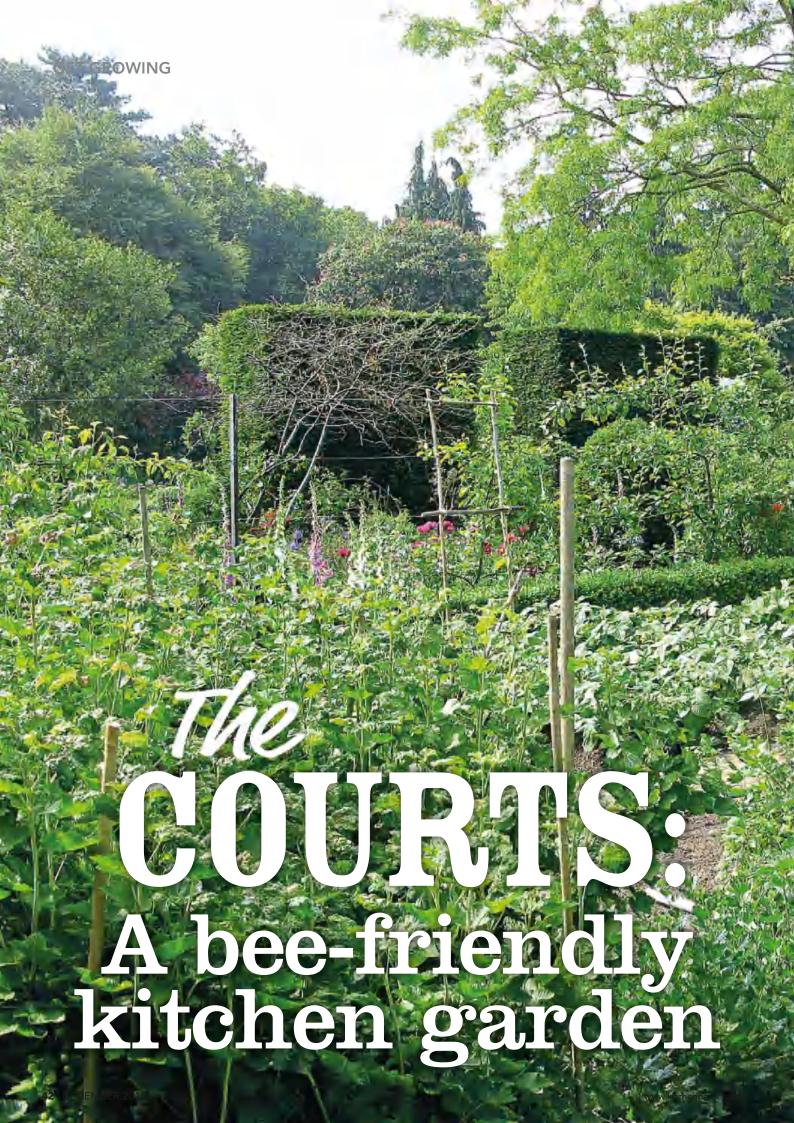
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One bright day in autumn

Susie Kearley went to explore the wonders of a formal kitchen garden in Wiltshire and its colonies of bees

he Courts in Wiltshire has a small but interesting kitchen garden, along with a particular interest in beekeeping. They grow a wide variety of vegetable crops and bee-friendly flowers, and have a beekeeper on their team who looks after two colonies of honeybees.

It was a bright autumn day when we arrived at The Courts. We made our way through the formal gardens to the kitchen garden, and were immediately drawn to the arched trellis that runs through the centre of the vegetable plots. It is adorned with grapevines and trained apple espaliers. The vegetable plots were abundant with squashes, beans, rhubarb, fennel, gooseberries, chard, strawberries, leaks, beetroot, chives, salad greens, sage and cabbages. There were even pear trees growing up the walls.

The whole experience was enlivened by a temporary exhibition about the decline of bumblebees. The boards have since been removed, but here's a little of what we learnt that day.



SAVING THE BUMBLEBEE

There are more than 20 different types of bumblebee in Britain. They are fairly placid around people and unlikely to sting you unless you really annoy them. Their stings leave no venom, so are arguably less painful than venomous bee stings.

Like the rest of the bee population, these small furry creatures are under threat. They are vital to crop production, but not enough is being done to protect them – two species of bumblebee have become extinct in recent years and others are in rapid decline.

One bumblebee does 50 times the work of a honeybee, so their decline presents a real threat to our food supply. Government solutions include wild flower meadows, and areas set aside for conservation, but it's a political hotbed and, at present, the bee population is still in decline overall. Recently, a pesticide thought to harm bees has been banned by the EU. It remains to be seen what effect this will have on the bee population.

The variety of flora in the UK has declined due to intensive farming. This is partly to blame for the decline of the bee population, so gardeners can do their bit by growing bee-friendly plants that provide a valuable source of food (nectar) for these threatened species. For bumblebees to thrive, the local landscape needs to offer food from a variety of plants all year round. Unlike honey bees, bumblebees don't store much food for the winter.

Every year 10,000 colonies of bumblebees are imported to work in polytunnels in the UK because our native species are in decline. The use of pesticides is threatening the population, so gardeners can help by reducing pesticide use where possible. With a little knowledge, and the right loving care, our gardens can be a haven of food and tranquillity for bumblebees.

MEET THE COURTS' BEE KEEPER

Diane Sleigh looks after the two honeybee colonies on site.

"I was fascinated by a beekeeping demonstration at the 2007 Royal Agricultural Show," she said. "It inspired me to attend a beekeeping taster day and after that I was hooked!

"When I moved to Wiltshire in 2008, I joined the National Trust at Dyrham Park and took up beekeeping, learning from other beekeepers and rapidly increasing the number of colonies I kept.

"Then, in 2011, I joined The Courts garden team. There was a lot of public interest in the plight of the honeybee and we decided to have a couple of colonies in the garden. It fitted with the conservation aims of the trust, and the bees would be beneficial to the kitchen garden as well as the flowering plants and trees.

"Visitors today can join one of our Meet the Beekeeper activities on special days, three times a year. With a friend from Melksham Beekeepers' Association, I show visitors inside a hive (without bees). The visitors can take a look at honeycomb, taste honey taken from the bees that day, and chat about the life cycle and foraging habits of honeybees.

"In March I open the hives and look through the frames of bees, first

fortnightly, then
weekly as the
weather hots
up. I am looking
for eggs – an
indication that
the queen is
doing her job;
looking to see
that the developing
larvae are healthy; and
checking whether the bees
have lots of honey and pollen. I also
monitor the numbers of the dreaded
varroa mite.

"I always ensure that the bees have plenty of honey to see them through the winter. If there is an excess, I'll put it into jars. We give some to our volunteers, and if there is enough, we sell it at visitor reception.

"The declining bee population is a concern. I lost two colonies in March last year due to a prolonged spell of cold weather. Fortunately, people have become interested in providing habitats and plants for honeybees which I think is vital. There has also been increased research. The more we learn about nutrition and the best conditions for our bees, the more we can help."



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GET GROWING



Neil grows a traditional selection of vegetables and a range of soft fruit too





Neil Carter, the gardener in charge of the kitchen garden, told me about his role.

"After an early career in engineering and telecoms, I decided to study horticulture in 2003. Two years later, I started work in the gardens of Dyrham Park, a National Trust Property in Gloucestershire. I worked there for more than five years before coming to The Courts in 2010.

"The kitchen garden at The Courts is part productive and part display. I grow a traditional selection of vegetables, including carrots, beetroot, parsnips, celeriac, swede, turnips, brassicas, beans, peas, alliums, squashes, courgettes, tomatoes and salads. We also have permanent plantings of black and red currants, rhubarb, asparagus, gooseberries and strawberries.

"Recently, I've added some more unusual crops - Jerusalem artichokes, cape gooseberries, aubergines, goji berries and quinoa. We've also planted up a 4ft-square garden to show what can be achieved in a confined space, as well as growing potatoes in bags and boxes.

"Flowers to attract bees and beneficial insects are all a part of the plan. I grow a selection of flowers around the plots that attract pollinating insects and deter pests. These include calendulas, nasturtiums, red flax, sun flowers, tagetes, asparagus, peas, chrysanthemums, foxgloves and coriander, which I allow to flower. The bees are also attracted to the vegetables, the soft fruit bushes and the archway of apples.

"I have a lot of freedom in planning and planting the kitchen garden and get a great sense of satisfaction from harvesting the produce."



WHAT SHOULD GARDENERS PLANT TO HELP BEES?

Diane said: "Honeybees have short tongues, so simple, open flowers with nectaries that honeybees can reach are the plants to go for. Have a think about what you could plant that flowers during late autumn, winter and early spring as these are the times when there isn't much pollen around. Honeybees don't hibernate. They cluster together to keep the queen warm and alive and they will fly on warm winter days.

"Winter-flowering cherry, mahonia, snowdrops and crocus along with hazel would be good plants for bees. I have been amazed at how popular my golden marjoram and thyme have been to all sorts of bees and pollinators so get those herbs in your kitchen garden and the bees will be around to pollinate the vegetables as well."

Neil added: "The best flowers for bees are single, simple, open flowers allowing easy access to the pollen – don't use blousy, showy blooms. I'd recommend perennials such as crocuses and snowdrops in the winter and spring, lavender during the summer months, and sedum in the autumn. Annuals such as calendulas, tagetes, borage and annual herbs are also beneficial."

USEFUL LINKS

- The Bumblebee Conservation Trust www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.org.uk ■ The British Beekeeping Association
- www.bbka.org.uk
- The Courts

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/courts-garden





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SCOTTISH FESTIVAL HOSTS TOP SHOW GROWERS Gaby Bartai reports from the Dundee Flower and Food Festival, where Britain's most dedicated show growers were

celebrating the 2015 season

he Scottish show season draws to a close with the Dundee Flower and Food Festival. which takes place over the first weekend in September. With more than 20,000 visitors and two acres of marquees, it's the biggest gardening event north of the border apart from Gardening Scotland - and that, at the beginning of June, can't really compete on produce.

The original Dundee flower show has expanded to incorporate a food and cookery festival, and it's also home to the World Potato Championships. This year the festival was also playing host to the National Vegetable Society's National Championships, so kitchen gardeners were out in force - and so too was Kitchen Garden.



Class 16 for celery saw another win for Ian Stocks

NATIONAL VEGETABLES

For Britain's top show growers, the NVS National Championships are the culmination of the gardening year. This is vegetable growing of the very highest order. Entry is open to any of the society's 2300 members, but in practice it's only an inner circle of highly committed growers who can achieve the exacting standards demanded at this level. The same roster of familiar names appeared over and over again on the prize cards, and the trophies for the 26 individual classes - awarded amid much good-natured banter and in-jokes - were shared between just 13 growers.

The National Championships take place each September and rotate around the five NVS branches - Southern, Midlands, Northern, Welsh and Scottish. They generally take place under the umbrella of a larger show, with Dundee hosting the Scottish events in recent years. Next year the Welsh branch is in charge, with the show taking place on September 10 and 11 at the National Botanic Garden of Wales.

Everybody I spoke to complained about what a difficult growing year it's been, but you couldn't have guessed that from the quality of the exhibits. "For a really bad year, the Scottish lads have really pushed the boat out," said >



Ronnie Jackson took the trophy for pot leeks



11-year-old Calum Little's 'outstanding exhibit' won him fourth place for peas

GET GROWING



Young grower Owain Roberts took first for coloured potatoes and for potato 'NVS Amour'



Wherever gardeners are gathered together, you get a box of spare courgettes...

Medwyn Williams, NVS president and one of this year's judges, when I asked him for his verdict. "The quality is superb in every class. The standard is high. And there's some young blood coming through. There's an 11-year-old boy who's been mentored by one of the growers, and he's managed to get fourth for his peas, from 20 plants in his back garden." Calum Little had been awarded a Judge's Choice 'Outstanding Exhibit' certificate to mark his achievement – but hadn't yet seen it because he was at school.

■ Full results and more pictures can be found at www.nvsuk.org.uk



Veteran grower Peter Clark took first for his large exhibition onions – and three other trophies besides



These perfect cauliflowers won Graeme Watson a red card

NVS AGM

Alongside the National
Championships, the annual
general meeting of the National
Vegetable Society takes place.
After the routine business –
annual reports, matters arising,
the unanimous re-election of
national committee members
– there was much discussion
about how to keep the work of
the NVS relevant to a modern
world. "You don't get better
than this, anywhere in the
world. We pride ourselves in the

UK, it's part of our heritage," Medwyn Williams had told me earlier. The pressing question, of course, is how to take that heritage forward into the 21st century.

Once duly re-elected as president, Medwyn spoke of his pride in the organisation – but went on to voice his concerns about its future. The active membership, he said, is increasingly elderly (and, I would add, predominantly male). "You only have to look around to see how many grey hairs there are,

or even no hairs at all." Many committee members, he said, are already well into their 80s, while many district committees have long-standing vacancies. He made a plea to younger members to step forward, "or our future is very bleak, as far as I can see". He added: "Don't be intimidated – you'll be welcomed with open arms."

Chairman David Allison echoed these concerns but also spoke positively about initiatives to attract new and younger members. The NVS website has been relaunched under the management of secondgeneration member Emily Plumb (the daughter of potato grower Sherie). She's also in charge of the organisation's new Facebook and Twitter accounts, created in order to reach a younger demographic. The NVS is also developing work with schools, in response to the recent inclusion of gardening in the National Curriculum and concerns that they weren't doing enough to reach out to this potential new generation of growers.

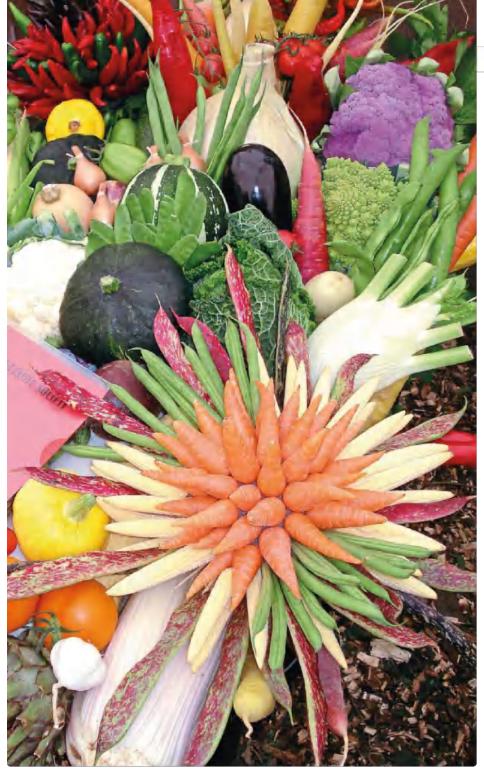


Veg from the NVS displays helped engage young show visitors



President Medwyn Williams addresses the NVS membership







The Inter Branch Competition was introduced into the NVS National Championship schedule five years ago and is now an established part of proceedings. The organisers spotted an opportunity to showcase their produce in a creative way that engages a show audience more readily than the regimented individual exhibits – and the crowds around this year's display proved the point.

This year the challenge was to display a range of produce in a wheelbarrow, and the competition was sponsored by none other than KG. Each barrow was assembled on site using the pick of produce taken to the show by branch members; the stand-out winning Welsh entry had been put together by Carmarthenshire member Sue McCall.



Sue McCall with the Welsh wheelbarrow



WORLD-BEATING POTATOES

Essex potato queen Sherie Plumb reclaimed the title of World Potato Champion from Scottish grower Alistair Gray, who had held the crown for the past two years. The championship, based in Scotland because it's sponsored by Scottish company JBA Seed Potatoes, is scored on six tubers of four varieties, and Sherie's winning selection was 'Kestrel', 'Purple-Eyed Seedling', 'Winston' and 'Sherine'.

Sherie Plumb also won the Scottish Potato Championships with four perfectly matched tubers of four varieties – this time 'Amour', 'Nadine', 'Winston' and 'Sherine'. That made it a hat-trick, as she had already secured the National Potato Championship of Great Britain, which took place at the end of August.



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SCOTLAND ON SHOW

Alongside the NVS Championships, the regular Dundee Festival show was taking place. This is the biggest horticultural show on the east coast of Scotland, with a schedule of more than 700 classes. The individual entries were on a more modest scale than the NVS exhibits at the other end of the marquee, which was to be expected – but they also took up less space. Dundee's impressive schedule is testament to a bygone age, but actual entries this year were sparse. The pride that

kitchen gardeners take in their produce doesn't, any longer, seem to translate into putting it on show. Is this simply a sign of changing times, or could horticultural shows be reinvented for the new grow-yourown generation? That's another question for the management of the NVS.



SILVER SUCCESS

The Dundee and East of Scotland District Association of the NVS put on their usual impeccable display to advertise the home team. This year it was centred around the celebration of the District Association's 25th anniversary, spelt out in cherry tomatoes on a parsley background – and, appropriately, it won them a silver medal.



Dundee NVS stand detail



KG ON THE ROAD

The Kitchen Garden Roadshow had journeyed north for the weekend. Editor Steve Ott, Martin Fish and Sarah Hopps shared their expertise in talks and Q&A sessions in the events marquee, while just outside, staff writer Tony Flanagan and advertising manager Sandra Fisher were to be found at the KG stand, meeting existing Scottish readers and welcoming new ones.

FIND OUT MORE:

- www.dundeeflowerandfoodfestival.com
- www.nvsuk.org.uk
- www.facebook.com/ nationalvegetablesociety
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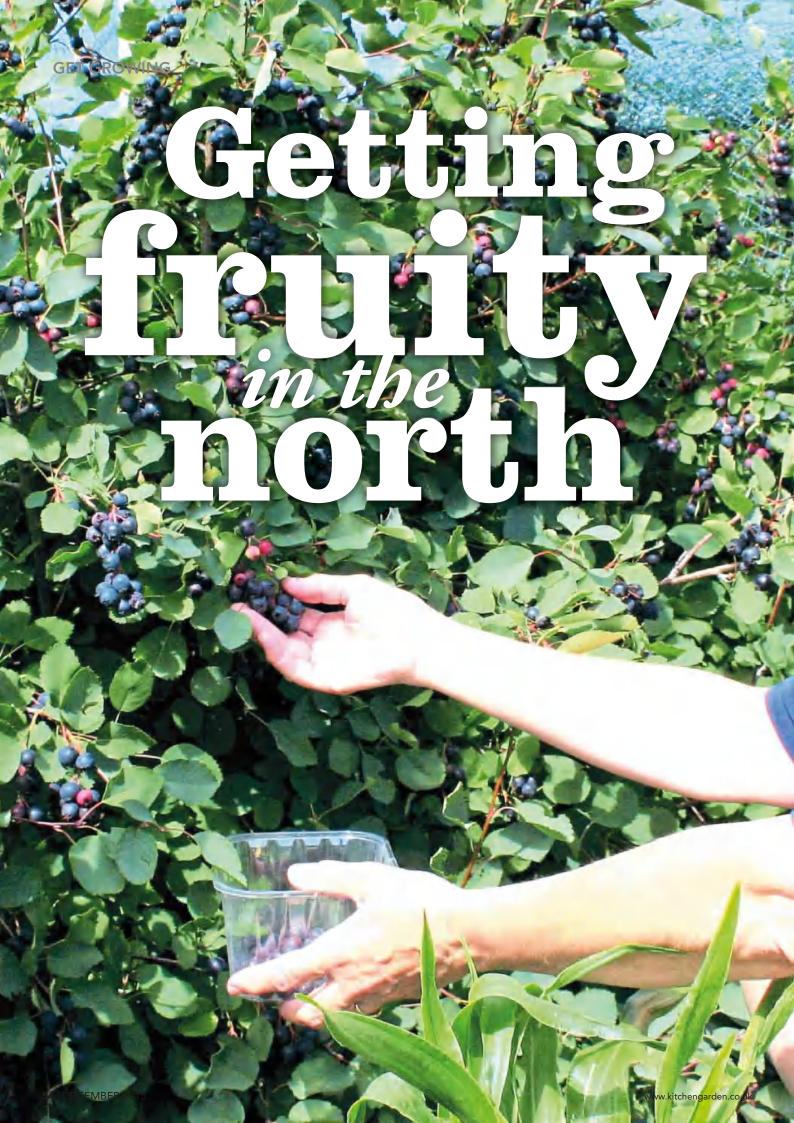


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Growing fruit in the northern parts of the UK may be more challenging but not if you choose the right ones as John Stoa, a former nurseryman, author and gardening expert explains

s a kid growing up in Scotland in the 1950s it was normal to spend a fair bit of your school holidays cycling out to the country to help growers pick the raspberry and strawberry crops. Country life was a real pleasure away from the stresses of living in a council housing estate.

The taste of those fresh raspberries and strawberries has stayed with me all my life.

After a time as a gardener, I became a scientist at our local crop research institute and there discovered new experimental crops called blueberries and saskatoons which I was harvesting in 1966. Blueberries took off commercially at great speed, but saskatoons had to wait another 40 years before I decided to grow and promote them. They are slowly finding their way into garden centres, allotment sites and soon the supermarkets will want to stock the fruit.

In Dundee we have a colder climate, but my desire to grow those fruit types that are normal in the south has led me to experiment with a range of fruit considered exotic in Scotland without protection. With the promise of climate change giving us a wee bit of global warming, who knows what lies ahead.

Plant breeders continue to supply us with all sorts of innovations so many of these find their way into my garden and allotment for a few seasons of evaluation.

STRAWBERRIES

This fruit has always been my favourite so I have now sorted out my growing method to taste my first one by mid-May then continue with fresh fruit till the autumn frosts. I use the variety 'Mae' with one row under a low polythene tunnel put on at the beginning of March. This enhances cropping and the

protection eliminates botrytis and bird damage. Slug pellets are necessary to control slugs, which just love my berries, and keep an eye out for mice which love the seeds on the berry skin. Then another row of 'Mae' is my early outdoor variety followed by 'Elsanta' in mid-season.

I use 'Symphony' and 'Florence' for late crops, but then it is the perpetual 'Flamenco' which continues cropping till the frosts appear in late autumn and spoil the fun.

RASPBERRY

Breeding of this fruit continues in Scotland at the James Hutton Institute, but the need is for types suited to tunnel production, so I am trying out their 'Glen Fyne' outdoors without a tunnel. Canes are quite prolific, and though height is a bit lacking, fruit size and quality is excellent.

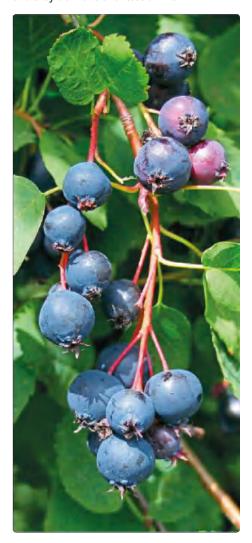
However, there are three autumn fruiting varieties worthy of a wee trial. 'Autumn Treasure', 'Joan J' and 'Polka' are all said to be far bigger than our standard 'Autumn Bliss'. Time will tell if this is the case as my plants are now in their second year.



BLACKCURRANTS These have also been bred for increase in size with enhanced sweetness and vitamin C content in the variety 'Big Ben'. It is hoped to produce large fruit, sweeter and healthier than the normal to encourage the fresh fruit market where folk eat the fruit direct from the punnet. My bushes are now in their third year so hopefully 'Big Ben' will put 'Ben Conan' to shame.

SASKATOONS

These are still relatively new, but now fairly well known, though not well stocked at garden centres. This is the large-berried form of *Amelanchier alnifolia* and comes in numerous varieties such as 'Smoky', 'Thiessen', 'Northland', 'Pembina', 'JB30' and 'Martin'. They are similar to the blueberry but have higher levels of vitamin C and antioxidants and are sweeter to taste. They are very easy to grow as they are not fussy about soil. I use mine as fresh fruit in season then freeze surplus for compote, summer puddings, jam and they do make a fantastic wine.



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PEACH 'PEREGRINE'

I have grown this outdoors as a fan against a south-facing fence for several years but the success rate has been questionable. After wet winters the trees suffer a lot of peach leaf curl even after two fungicide sprays in autumn and another in late winter. Last year was a lot better as we got a good summer, but spring was so cold that there was a complete absence of bees. Hand pollination is normal with peaches as they flower so early, but the pollinated flowers still need some warm days to allow fertilisation to work. They never got it so there was no fruit in 2014. This year the spring was very cold for a long time so there was still no sign of any flowers by early April, though the bees were waiting patiently this time!



GRAPES

Growing grapes successfully outdoors in Scotland is my latest dream. It is easy to find a large, warm, southfacing wall or fence and once you have sorted out the pruning system to control the vigour and encourage fruit development, all that is left

My interest started with the purchase of the ornamental variety 'Brant' grown mainly for its autumn colour and ability to cover a large area of fence or wall rapidly with dense foliage. However, as I grow plenty of greenhouse grapes and have mastered the pruning I started to summer prune 'Brant' to control vigour. I got a great crop of black, sweet, juicy grapes packed tight into small bunches which you can pop into your mouth whole and just pull out the stalk. Now if these can be successful in Scotland why not some of the larger

for success is to find the right variety.

fruiting varieties?

Thus I am now putting a few on trial along my south-facing fences.

Best one to date is 'Phoenix' followed by 'Solaris', but both 'Rondo' and 'Regent' produced a lot of good bunches before the phytophthora root rot wiped them out. This disease has been a real pest

wiping out a row of raspberries, my four-year-old goji, a whitecurrant, a gooseberry and my experimental blaeberries, (Vaccinium myrtillus).

Other recently planted grapes include 'Muscat Bleu' and 'Polo Muscat' and this year I am replacing 'Rondo' and 'Regent' on fresh soil and also trying out 'Siegerrebe'.

Outdoor grapes are very hardy so our Scottish winters are no problem, but they need a decent summer to produce large, healthy bunches, then a dry, warm, sunny autumn to ripen

This experiment will continue for many years.

CHERRIES

These now benefit from the newer 'Gisela 5' dwarfing rootstock. This has allowed my cherry 'Cherokee' to be fan trained against a 6ft fence and makes netting to keep the birds off a lot easier. Sampling your own fresh cherries in the middle of summer untainted by any chemicals is pure heaven.



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Considered a fruit but technically a vegetable, rhubarb has always been a popular choice for use in pies, tarts, crumbles, wine and jams, and popular too with growers as it's a plant that requires very little maintenance

hubarb is quite an ancient plant, dating back to China more than 2500 years ago, and was initially cultivated for its medicinal properties – mainly to give the system a good flushing out. However, it didn't arrive in Europe until the 17th century and was not cultivated in Britain until late 18th century. Now it is regarded as something of a superfood, being rich in Vitamin C and dietary fibre. As a perennial, it comes back year on year and can continue to flourish for up to 10 years.

flourish for up to 10 years. RHUBARB FROM SEED If growing rhubarb from seeds, these should be sown in spring, 2.5cm (1in) deep in drills 30cm (12in) apart. Once established, thin out to (23cm) 9in apart and then move the plants to their final planting position in winter. Alternatively, start them off in pots or modular cell trays filled with multipurpose compost and transplant to their final

position once established. It will take more than two years, however, before you will be able to harvest any stalks.

PLANTING CROWNS

The preferred option for most is to plant 'crowns', available online or from garden centres – a crown is simply a root portion of an established plant. Rhubarb grows from rhizomes, which means that the 'rootstock' is essentially a thick stem which forms roots and sends up stalks. When you split them, roots and stems will form from the separate portions.

Rhubarb prefers a sunny spot and fertile, well-drained soil. Prior to planting add plenty of well-rotted manure and some general purpose fertiliser to the area where they are to be planted. Otherwise, when you dig the hole, make it deep and wide and add plenty of well-rotted manure.



'FORCING' RHUBARB

With established rhubarb, you can get an early crop by 'forcing' it. All this means is that you get the plant to send up stalks earlier than usual by covering the crowns and thereby excluding light. There are special clay forcing pots you can buy for this but a large plastic pot will serve just as well. You might need to place a brick on top just to stop it being blown away by the wind. Surround the pot with straw and in about four weeks the crown should send up tender shoots. much sweeter than stalks grown in the usual way. With forced crowns, leave for two years before picking again to enable them to recover.

Another method is to dig up the crowns in late autumn and let the frost get to them. Then put them into a pot filled with multi-purpose compost, water in and then cover with another pot. Place in a frost-free place. The downside is that you will need to discard the crowns afterwards.

SPLITTING RHUBARB

After about five years it's best to dig up your rhubarb and split it. The tell-tale signs that it needs splitting are thinner and weaker stalks than usual. This should be done in winter. Dig up the root and with a sharp-edged spade, divide it into two or three pieces, depending on the size. These can then be replanted (or given away if surplus to requirements). Rhubarb roots can run quite deep so be prepared to do some hard digging! Make sure you get all of the crown up too as any portions left in the ground will send up shoots in spring.



CONTAINER GROWING

It's perfectly feasible to grow rhubarb in a pot but make sure it's a big one, 60cm (24in) deep and 60cm (24in) diameter, and that there are drainage holes in the pot. Fill with multi-purpose compost, plant the crown just below the surface of the compost and water in. Add a mulch of well-rotted organic matter in early spring and add a liquid feed of general fertiliser in spring and summer.

Before planting, it's a good idea to give the crown a good soaking for an hour or so. It should then be planted with buds just above the surface of the soil, then firm down the soil and water in. Rhubarb grows into large, leafy plants and therefore needs a lot of space, so if you are planting more than one place them at least 1m (39in) apart.

AFTERCARE

Maintaining your rhubarb as it grows involves very little work. Adding a mulch of organic matter around the base of the plant in early spring will keep the soil moist and continue to provide valuable nutrients. A general fertiliser can be added in early spring and once again in the summer. Keep your rhubarb weed free and water regularly during dry spells. As the growing season progresses remove any weak stems or decaying leaves. Note that because of the oxalic acid in them, rhubarb leaves are very toxic so do not eat them! There is no problem adding them to the compost heap, however. Sometimes, because of fluctuation in temperature or irregular watering, rhubarb will start to flower. If this occurs, just remove flowering stems.



Water your rhubarb regularly in dry weather

VARIETIES TO TRY

- 'CHAMPAGNE': The stems of this early variety are deep red in colour.

 Suitable for forcing. Buy as crowns.

 'GLASKIN'S PERPETUAL': This can be
- 'GLASKIN'S PERPETUAL': This can be bought as seed and will produce large, juicy stems. A late-maturing variety.
- 'TIMPERLEY EARLY': This is the earliest maturing variety and well-suited to forcing. Stems are slender and bright red. Can be cut as early as March. Buy as crowns.
- 'VICTORIA': A late maturing, heavy cropping variety producing long, greenish-pink stems. Buy as crowns.

HARVESTING

Rhubarb is ready for picking spring to midsummer. To protect the vigour of your plants, don't pick rhubarb stalks in the first year of growing, and only sparingly in the second year. In subsequent years don't strip the plant completely as this will weaken it — leave at least four stalks attached.

Pulling rhubarb stalks is something of an acquired art. The best way is to run your finger down the inner part of the stem towards the crown and twist it gently away from the base with the other hand. If you try to do it from the top of the stalk, it's liable to snap, leaving a broken stem still attached to the crown which will then need to be removed to prevent rotting.

Rhubarb freezes well. Peel the stalks and cut up into small chunks; otherwise, boil these chunks first in a little water and then freeze.



RHUBARB AND STRAWBERRY

CRUMBLE: These two make a great combination with the tartness of the rhubarb balanced with the sweetness of the strawberry.

RHUBARB

AND PORRIDGE: Great on cold, winter mornings, giving you the chance to bring frozen stewed rhubarb out of the freezer to give your porridge oats a lift. Add other soft fruit such as blueberries and strawberries if available.



TOP TIP Rhubarb leaf or stem placed in the hole when planting brassicas is said to deter club root disease

PEST AND DISEASES

crown rot.

CROWN ROT: Waterlogging or wet heavy soil can cause the crowns to rot so picking the right site is important. There is no cure unfortunately – dig up infected plants and burn.

HONEY FUNGUS: This shows itself as white streaks on the crown. There's nothing that can cure this fungal disease so dig up the crown and burn as for



Wait till the second year of growth before you start picking stalks, and even then do it sparingly

CLUMBER PARK RHUBARB RARITIES

The rhubarb collection at the National Trust's Clumber Park in Nottingham is the largest in the UK with 130 varieties. The collection includes many rare and traditional varieties, some of which would have disappeared if they had not been collected and cultivated. Much of the credit for this collection goes to Chris Margrave, Clumber Park's head gardener.

For more information on Clumber Park visit: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/clumber-park



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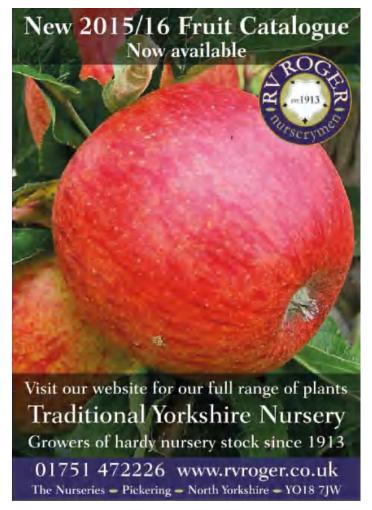
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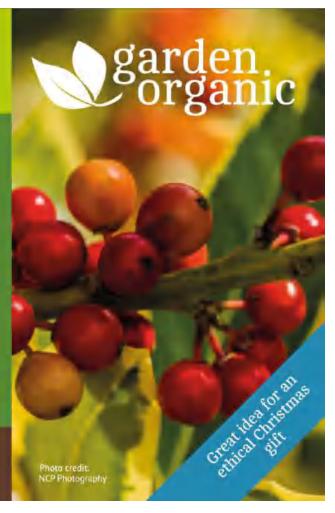
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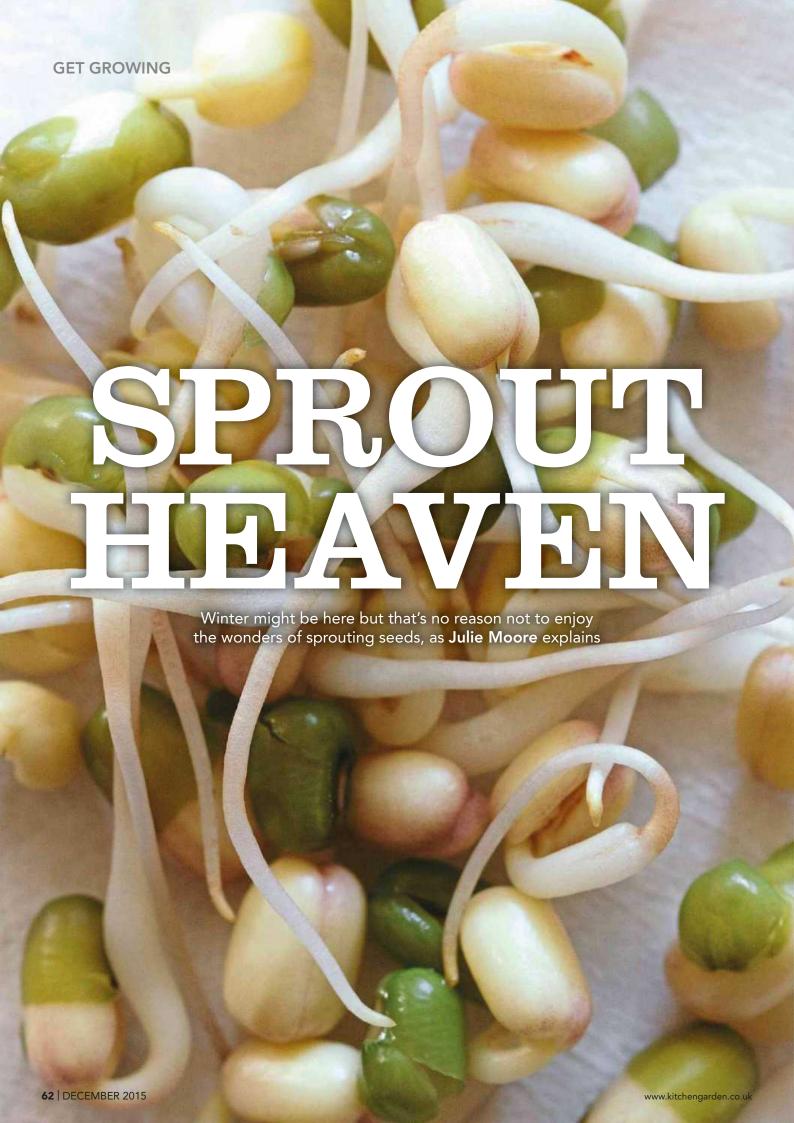
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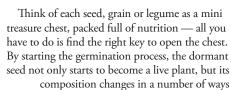
STEP BY STEP HOW TO SPROUT SEEDS

STEP 1. Find a large glass jar with a lid. Drill small 3mm holes in the lid or punch holes with a hammer and nail. If you're sprouting small seeds such as alfalfa, dispense with the lid and use a piece of muslin and elastic band over the glass jar. STEP 2. Wake your seeds up! Dry seeds are dormant. Soaking a seed ends its dormancy and begins a new life. Put a small amount of seed in your clean jar don't be tempted to add too many as the seeds will swell up to four times their size in volume and will continue expanding as they grow. Fill the jar with water, cover with the lid or muslin and leave to soak for the recommended time, usually between eight and 24 hours depending on size. STEP 3. After soaking time is up, drain the water through the holes in the lid.

Rinse by re-filling the jar with fresh water. Gently swirl the seeds around and drain off, leaving the seeds damp, but not swimming in water. Place the jar upside-down at an angle so moisture can drain off and air can circulate around the opening. Leave in a warm, dark place to begin germination. Continue to rinse twice a day until the sprouts are ready to use.

STEP 4. Put green leafed sprouts on the kitchen windowsill when their leaves have shed their hulls or are about to so they can colour up this should take a day or so.

STEP 5. Give the sprouts a final rinse to remove the hulls before eating straight away or leave them to drain thoroughly for eight to 12 hours before transferring them to a plastic bag or container and putting them in the fridge where they should keep for up to a week.



which are beneficial to you compared to its dried embryo.

Several key nutrients are increased during the sprouting process whilst others are made more accessible to us. Sprouting increases the vitamin A, B-complex and C content whilst the naturally occurring phytic acid and enzyme inhibitors in the outer layer of bran which

block the absorption of many minerals (such as calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, sodium and zinc) are actually neutralised, allowing our bodies to more easily absorb and assimilate these minerals. The sprouting process converts dense vegetable protein into simpler amino acids. The resultant protein is the most easily digestible of all proteins available in >











ith less daylight over the winter months the vegetable plot can seem like a barren and uninviting desert. But don't despair, just because it's cold outside you don't have to forego tasty and nutritious vegetables sprouting seeds are the way to

go. A handful of seeds, a suitable container, moisture, air and a few days are all you need to keep your green fingers busy and all

grain or from the comfort of your home! legume as a Medicinally and mini treasure nutritionally, sprouts have a long history dating back some chest" 5,000 years to ancient China where doctors recommended them for healing many illnesses. The Chinese also carried mung beans on long sea voyages, sprouting and eating them throughout their journey as they contained enough vitamin C to ward off scurvy. Who doesn't need a little extra vitamin C in its natural absorbable form, especially when fighting off those pesky colds that abound at this time of year?

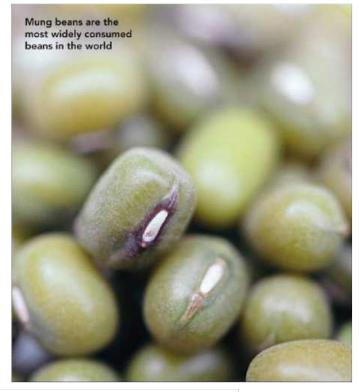


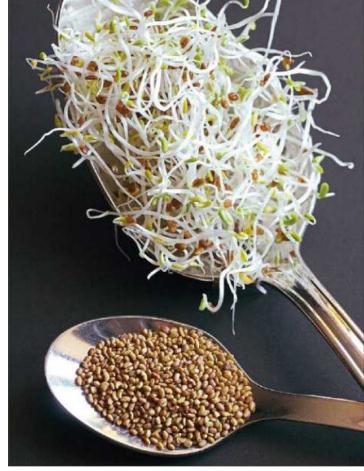
"Think

of each seed,

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GET GROWING





Sprouting is extremely quick, taking between a few days and a week



foods whilst complex carbohydrates start to break down into simpler glucose molecules, all of which allows us to digest our seed, grain or legume more easily. It's hardly any wonder that sprouts have been championed as a "superfood" in recent years, gaining popularity in the natural food world.

Sprouting is extremely quick, taking anything from a few days to no more than a week to produce the first root and shoot, providing you with a constant supply of fresh, crunchy and nutritious sprouts when other salads are sparse. It's also a great way to get children involved in gardening too — even the youngest or most impatient child can't fail to be enthusiastic about the speedy growth of the seeds.

There are many plants that have great seeds for sprouting, including the green leafy kinds, for example, alfalfa, broccoli and radish, and grains such as wheat and barley along with legumes such as mung beans (the most widely consumed sprout in the world), adzuki beans and lentils. Each sprout type has its own unique flavour and texture. You'll find that the flavours change the longer you leave the seeds to sprout, so don't be afraid to experiment and try the sprouts at

different stages of development until you find the taste you like.

In general, the green leafy sprouts and grains are eaten raw and the legumes are cooked. Add sprouts to salads, sandwiches, breads and even desserts; they can be used as garnishes for soups or tossed into stir-fries rather than eating them on their own. Eating a variety of different sprouts is the best way to take advantage of their distinctive flavours and health benefits.

You can buy seeds specifically for sprouting from the major seed companies or health shops. It's best to avoid the temptation to use up any surplus vegetable seeds you might have lying around as some outdoor seeds may have been chemically treated to aid germination.

Now you have your seeds, you'll need a sprouter. Whilst you can buy sprouting kits, it's incredibly easy to make your own.

Very easy to grow and requiring little space or maintenance, sprouts are a living food bursting with nutrients which can be easily digested, making them the perfect crop for the winter months. Start experimenting and you'll soon be growing your own sprouting stairway to heaven!

TIMELINE

Adzuki bean timeline starting from raw stage then photographed every twelve hours.



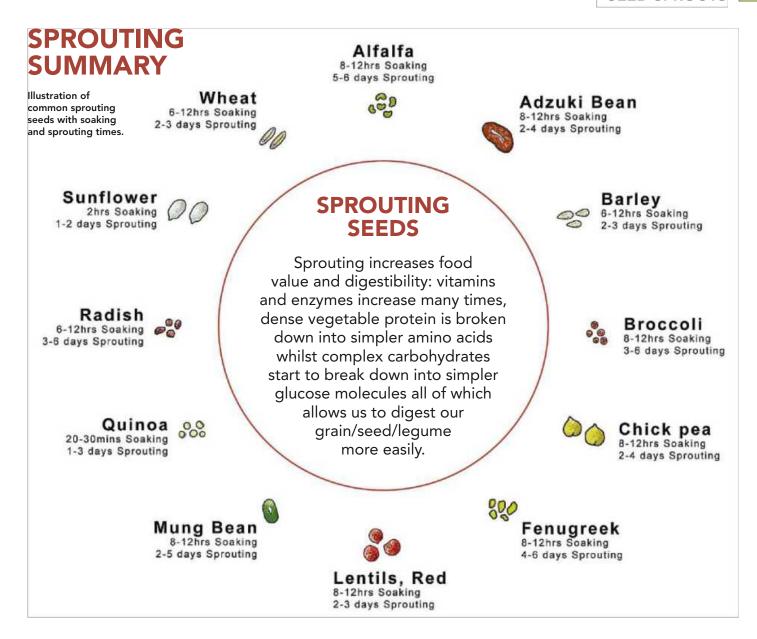












GUIDE TO SPROUTING SEEDS

SEED	SOAKING TIME	TIME TO HARVEST	FLAVOUR	NUTRITION
Alfalfa	8 - 12 hours	5 - 6 days	Crunchy & mild	Vit A, B, C, E & K, Calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, carotene, chlorophyll, amino acids, trace elements
Adzuki bean	8 - 12 hours	2 - 4 days	Robust, meaty & sweet	Vit A, B, C & E, High in calcium, iron, niacin. All essential amino acids except tryptophan
Barley	6 - 12 hours	2 - 3 days	Chewy, less sweet, low in gluten	Vitamin B, C & E, Calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, amino acids
Broccoli	8 - 12 hours	3 - 6 days	Mild cabbage flavour	Vit A, B, C, E & K, Calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, carotene, chlorophyll, amino acids, trace elements, antioxidants
Chick pea	8 - 12 hours	2 - 4 days	Sweet	Vitamin A & C, Calcium, iron, magnesium, amino acids
Fenugreek	8 - 12 hours	4 - 6 days	Bitter & spicy	Vit A, B, C & E, Calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, carotene, chlorophyll, amino acids, trace elements
Lentils, red	8 - 12 hours	2 - 3 days	Sweet & crunchy	Vitamin A, B, C & E, Calcium, iron, niacin, phosphorus, amino acids
Mung bean	8 - 12 hours	2 - 5 days	Sweet & crunchy	Vitamin A, B, C & E, Calcium, iron, magnesium, potassium, amino acids
Quinoa	20 - 30 mins	1 - 3 days	Light & crunchy	Vitamin A, B, C & E, Calcium, iron, magnesium, niacin, phosphorus, potassium, all amino acids
Radish	6 - 12 hours	3 - 6 days	Tastes like the fully grown radish from your plot	Vit A, B, C, E & K, Calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, carotene, chlorophyll, amino acids, antioxidants
Sunflower	2 hours	1 - 2 days	Nutty	Vitamin A, B, C & E, Calcium, iron, magnesium, niacin, phosphorus, potassium
Wheat	6 - 12 hours	2 - 3 days	Sweet& creamy & chewy	Vitamin B, C & E, Calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, amino acids



HOW TO MAKE A Bird feeder

WEEKEND PROJECT

here's nothing quite like a home-made gift and, with Christmas approaching, it's a great excuse to get busy with ideas for the gardener. Of course you can make shelves, dibbers or tool racks. You can make seed trays, and kneelers also, but how nice to make a gift that doesn't hint of work and is designed to provide years of enjoyment.

A bird feeder is a delight in any garden, this one is easy to make and it won't take much more than a morning. It's a lovely, personal gift when it is unwrapped and it only gets lovelier as birds come to adorn it.

DESIGN NOTES

The central column/dispenser of this feeder protects seeds and nuts from rain, but allows them to roll out, through gaps at the base, into an easily accessible tray.

The hinged lid is set at an angle of 112 degrees. This means the two sections are offset a little to give a slight step at the hinge point. This allows for a roof that spreads wide enough to cover the tray and hence sheds water off the feeder. A right-angle hinge point may be easier to make, but the tray size would need to be much smaller in order to keep feed dry.

TYPES OF TIMBER

I used a planed cedar board. This is a pretty durable timber outdoors and so doesn't have to be painted. Nails go nicely into a soft timber like cedar or pine. If you use a harder timber, like larch or oak, you may prefer to use stainless steel screws.

If you use a less durable timber there are many colourful stains and paints that can be used to treat it. Rough-sawn timber can also look attractive

You can of course use more than one board to make this and you can change dimensions to suit a wider or narrower board.



TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- Wooden board, approximately 150mm x 1500mm
- 2 @ 2.5mm brass hinges and screws
- 40mm galvanised oval nails (blunt the ends of the nails by tapping them against a hard surface — this reduces the chance of the wood splitting.)
- Saw, square, tape measure, pencil, sandpaper, drill, 3mm, 10mm and 1.5mm drill bits, hammer, small screwdriver.

feeder which would make a great gift for gardeners and their feathered friends

Joyce Russell builds a bird

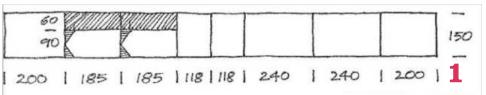
Photographs: Ben Russell



USING THE FEEDER

Lift the hinged section of roof in order to fill with nuts or seeds. These will spill out into the tray through the gap left at the base of the dispenser sides (step 5). It may take birds a little while to learn to trust any new feeder but it won't be long until they are flying in to eat.

STEP BY STEP MAKE A BIRD FEEDER



STEP 1

Mark out the board, as shown in the diagram, to give the following pieces:

- ➤ Base @ 150mm x 200mm
- ➤ 2 gable ends @ 185mm x 90mm. Draw a line across the gable end pieces 25mm from one end. Draw from the centre point to each end of this line to mark out the angle of the gable ends.
- ➤ Roof side @ 150mm x 240mm
- ➤ Roof side @ 115mm x 240mm
- ➤ 2 dispenser sides @ 150mm (x 118mm for feeding seed) (x 110mm for feeding peanuts)
- ➤ 4 tray sides @ 200mm x 30mm

Use the saw to cut out all the marked pieces. Try to cut as accurately as possible to aid assembly. It's also worth cutting to the same side of the lines and bearing in mind that a saw cut can take out 3mm of timber.

Sand all cut edges. ➤



STEP 3

Mark out and drill holes in the base:

- ➤ Use the 10mm bit to make a drainage hole in each corner
- ➤ Use the 3mm bit to make two holes in each of the long sides 8mm in from the edge and 75mm in from each end (hence 50mm apart)

 Mark out and drill the tray sides:
- ➤ Use the 3mm bit to make two holes in each of the four pieces 8mm in from the edge and 50mm from each end

Mark out and drill the gable ends:

➤ Use the 3mm bit to make four holes in each piece — 8mm from the edge and 40mm from each end

STEP 4

Mark out and drill the roof:

➤ Using the 240mm x 150mm roof section, mark and drill two holes, 24mm in from the edge and 67mm each side of a centre line.

Mark and drill two more holes 66mm from the edge and 67mm each side of a centre line

STEP 5

Assemble the dispenser. Knock four nails into each gable end first so the sides can be accurately positioned. The sides are shorter than the uprights of the gable ends – this leaves a gap at the base for seeds or nuts to roll out into the tray. A 10mm gap is large enough for seed mixtures, but an 18mm gap may be better for peanuts. Hold everything square and steady before knocking nails into place.

STEP 6

Assemble the tray base. Nail through the predrilled holes in the sides, into the base. Again make sure everything is accurately placed before nailing.

STEP 7

Fix the dispenser into the tray base. Turn the dispenser upside down and use a scrap piece of timber as a support underneath — this takes any stress off the top of the gables when hammering. Measure from each side so the dispenser is positioned centrally.

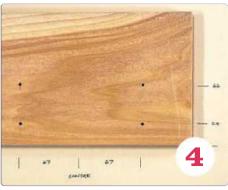
STEP 8

Nail the pre-drilled section of the roof on to one side of the dispenser. It's essential to position the two sides of the roof accurately. The side that is nailed on will overlap the top point of the gable and the two sides must butt together to allow hinges to be fitted. The outer edges of each roof section will overlap the lower tray and should be equal and balanced. If in doubt – eyeball it all first and hold the roof together with tape so you can get it just right.

STEP 9

Fit the hinges. Squeeze the two roof sections together so there is no gap between them and fit the two hinges in place. These should be 35mm from each end of the roof section. Use the 1.5mm drill to make pilot holes for the small screws before fixing.















TOP TIP

Refill when needed and make sure that the feed is rolling out from the dispenser into the tray.

A little shake will loosen things up

STEP 10

Fit a hanging cord. Use the 3mm bit to make two holes in the larger roof section. These should be 10mm in from each side and 10mm down from the top edge.

Strong rot-proof string, or wire, can be threaded through these and either knotted, or twisted, so the ends don't pull out when the feeder is hung in a tree. A top loop is also handy so the feeder won't slip if it is hung on a hook.



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Goodness

Rich, nutty and irresistible. The no-salt peanut butter for winter feeding.

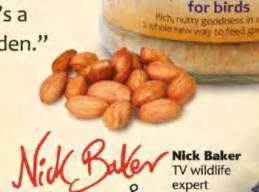
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GROWING GUIDES

WEBSITES & BLOGS FOR ALLOTMENT GARDENERS BY TONY FLANAGAN

SELF SUFFICIENCY

www.goselfsufficient.co.uk

Most of us like growing our own fruit and veg because, well, we like growing fruit and veg, plus it's cheaper, it's good exercise and the food is always fresh. And within many of us perhaps there lurks the dream of self sufficiency. This site is here to help you realise that dream, or at least go some way towards achieving it. First there is the month's 'Most Popular Articles', which for the month under review included 'Foraging for Nuts from the Hedgerows' and 'Self-Sufficient Energy'.

Beneath that there are 13 categories to choose from, including 'Allotments', 'Grow Herbs and Salad', 'Grow Vegetables', 'Foraging' and 'Natural Remedies', each of which leads to articles on these topics. You can leave comments and also read about other people's experiences. There are also case studies, such as 'Our First Year on the Allotment' and 'Home Composting and Growing Vegetables'. Well-organised, easy to navigate and with a hands-on approach, you will find plenty on this site to whet your self-sufficiency appetite.





KIDS IN THE KITCHEN www.kidsandcooking.co.uk

Young children usually don't need much encouragement to help out with cooking and baking. In my experience, they jump at the chance to indulge in the licence it gives them to be as messy as they want. After all, it's great fun too. And then there's all that they learn about different kinds of food, different kitchen utensils, weighing, measuring and the whole sensory experience of smelling, seeing and tasting. So, with Christmas in mind you could get your child to make a mini Christmas cake or cook Christmas decorations such as cinnamon stars.

There are articles here on making healthy snacks and increasing children's awareness of healthy eating. The videos on the site give practical demonstrations of how to cook different recipes with (of course!) cook's special little helpers alongside. Full of great ideas and activities, this site is for parents and guardians who are looking for practical advice on what they can do in the kitchen with and for their children.

CHANGING LIVES

www.thrive.org.uk

Thrive is a UK charity which aims to change the lives of disabled people, whether in the home garden, on an allotment, or in a community setting. A training and education consultancy, the charity provides its own structured horticultural therapy programmes, currently available in the South East. Through its work, people are able to regain confidence and build up self-esteem, socialise with others and enjoy better physical and mental health.

There is plenty of practical advice on offer for people with disabilities or those recovering from an accident or illness, with articles on 'Gardening when you use one hand', 'Gardening sitting down', 'Gardening after a stroke', 'Gardening to improve your emotional well-being', and others. The 'Equipment and Tools' page is very useful as it aims to match up the right tools to a particular disability. So, by selecting a gardening job such as 'digging' and then selecting, say, 'stroke and heart disease' you will be shown the most suitable tools to use. The basic philosophy underlying Thrive is that illness or disability doesn't have to be a barrier. In short, carry on gardening.



KG BOOKSHELF

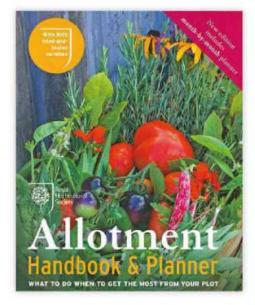
OUR ROUNDUP OF SOME OF THE BEST BOOKS FOR GARDENERS

THE RHS ALLOTMENT HANDBOOK AND PLANNER

Simon Akeroyd, Geoff Hodge, Sara Draycott, Guy Barter Mitchell Beazley £12.99

If, like me, you're a sucker for veg-growing manuals, then this won't disappoint. Prior to the individual entries for fruit and veg, there is plenty of advice on the benefits of having an allotment and preparing it for growing. It explores the idea of choosing an allotment 'style' – organic, no-dig, double-dig, raised beds, and so on.

The coverage of this manual is comprehensive – all kinds of veg, soft fruit, tree fruit, vine fruit, herbs, allotment flowers, keeping livestock; yet each entry is concisely structured using the sowing or planting, growing and harvesting format in most cases, and plenty of pruning advice regarding fruit. Each entry also has specific allotment advice ('what I wish I had known'), RHS recommendations of tried and tested varieties, and expected yields where applicable. There is just about the right balance between text and



picture. Perhaps to avoid duplication, weeds, pests and diseases are located in the reference section of the book, along with a crop planner and useful contacts. A valuable resource.

WHO IS IT FOR? Vegetable gardeners wanting practical, easily referenced advice.



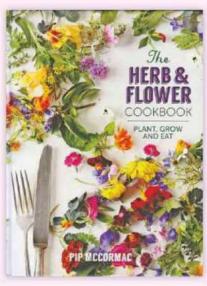
THE HERB AND FLOWER COOKBOOK

Pip McCormac Quadrille £16.99

The first thing you notice about this book is the attractiveness of its front cover with its colourful arrangement of herbs and flowers – a glimpse of what is to come inside. The recipes are logically organised into breakfasts, starters and sides, light dishes, main dishes, desserts and drinks but begins with a 'Herb and Flower Thesaurus' which gives planting and harvesting advice on each herb and flower, what to grow alongside it, and how it can be eaten (for example, raw, roasted, boiled and so on). For breakfast, the Italian rarebit with oregano looked positively mouthwatering – what a great breakfast to start the day! And what about chilli and rosemary carrot spears as a finger food? Or a dill and cucumber gin? Often we grow herbs but don't always know what to use them with. This book fills that knowledge gap, and makes the link between planting, growing and eating with simple but stimulating combinations.

WHO IS IT FOR? Herb lovers looking for inspiration in the kitchen.



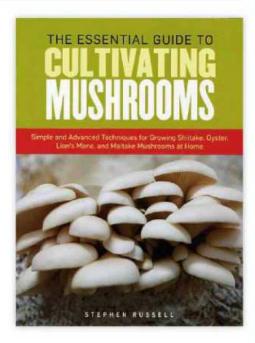


THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CULTIVATING MUSHROOMS

Stephen Russell Storey £17.99

Mushrooms are probably not at the top of one's growing list each year and they may be something we shy away from because they need a bit more specialist knowledge than say growing a radish. This is certainly true, but lack of knowledge shouldn't be a barrier with the help of this practical guide. The first part is for beginners: getting to know mushrooms, basic growing options, dealing with contaminants and growing mushrooms for the first time. Subsequent sections explore intermediate and advanced level methods.

The book does really well in explaining the materials you will need and the processes involved to obtain the desired results, supported by clear and informative photographs. Chapters are broken up into easily digestible chunks, making it a comfortable read and easy to dip in and out of, and it definitely lives up to its 'Essential Guide' tag.



WHO IS IT FOR? Beginners to mushroom cultivation, but plenty there too for experienced growers.



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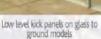


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POTATO DE RESISTANCE

Three brand new blight resistant varieties of potato have been developed by Agrico, a Dutch farmer-owned co-operative, as Laurence Hasson recounts



hese new blight resistant potatoes will be available for gardeners and allotment holders to grow next spring, two of them for the first time. They were launched at a blight resistance demonstration site open day in Devon on August 6, 2015. There were 29 varieties on the site which was within a commercial organic potato crop.

The guests were guided over the site by specialists from Agrico and then invited to a blind tasting at an organic lunch. Each new variety is grown for three consecutive years in nine European countries to test their performance before deciding which of them to develop for the market. Qualities looked for are appearance, yield, flavour and blight resistance. The outstanding winner this year was 'Alouette' which did well in all areas.

WHAT IS BLIGHT?

Potato blight (Phytophthora infestans) is one of the most damaging plant diseases in the world. It appears most years and spreads in the wind, landing on nearby plants. When blight spores land on a plant leaf they invade the cell membrane to take energy from the plant, resulting in cell destruction. The process will continue to spread until the potato plant dies. In some cases the spores can be washed into the soil when it

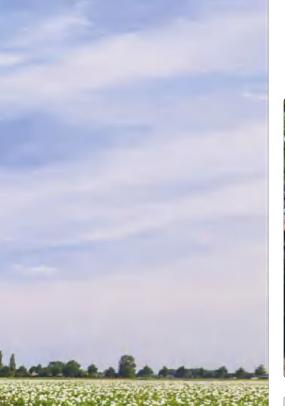
rains, causing the tubers to rot. In the early 1840s a blight epidemic raged through Europe which caused the disastrous Irish Potato Famine of 1846.

Originally farmers used copper sprays to create a temporary barrier to blight spores but these sprays can be washed off by rain. Although more effective chemicals have been developed, blight can mutate to beat the sprays. Government figures show that in 2012 commercial field crops of potatoes were sprayed on average 15 times with a

cocktail of modern systemic chemicals every seven days during the summer to keep the crops alive from blight.

Discoveries were made in the 1950s on naturally occurring blight resistant genes in some potato varieties but eventually the blight population mutated to overcome this resistance. The resistant gene worked as a sort of master lock to the invading spores but over time the spores learnt how to "pick the lock" and were able to gain entry. This led to more reliance on chemical control.

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BREEDING NEW BLIGHT RESISTANT VARIETIES

Potatoes are the fourth most important staple food globally. About 365 million tonnes were produced worldwide in 2012 and on average each of us eats about 100kg (220lb) every year in the UK.

Due to concerns about health risks and detrimental effects to the environment, plant breeders have been looking at more sustainable ways of dealing with potato blight. As a result Agrico, a Dutch-based farmer co-operative specialising in potato breeding, has been developing new blight resistant varieties for organic production and longer term sustainability in commercial potato production.

WILD STRAINS

Phytophthora infestans is believed to have originated in Mexico and there are wild strains of potatoes that have evolved there that can resist blight but do not produce useful yields. These wild strains were examined at Agrico's research station to see how they work. It was discovered that when the plant senses an active blight spore on a leaf, it sends an 'alarm call' that activates a protein. This protein is produced at the attack site and self-destructs the affected cells so the pathogen cannot feed and dies and there is no spread. This happens at microscopic levels.

So a new defence mechanism against blight was discovered. Cross-breeding with these wild strains began more than 15 years ago to develop new blight resistant varieties that can produce a yield that looks and tastes good.

A wild potato is crossed with a modern variety producing fruits with many seeds, each seed being a new variety. These are all planted separately in pots and breeder specialists will eventually choose which plants to develop. Normally, from about 10,000 seeds one new variety will emerge 15 years later.



Lesions on top of the leaf



Blight spreading to the whole plant



White sporulation on underside of leaf

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'ALOUETTE'

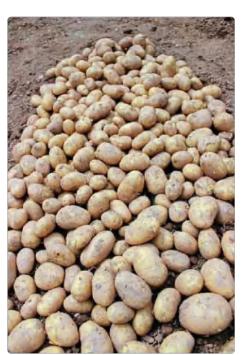
Alouette is the latest of the new blight resistant varieties to be



released and will be grown for the first time commercially in the UK in 2016. Meaning 'skylark' in French, 'Alouette' has an attractive oval long tuber with bright red skin and yellow flesh.

This is a main crop potato and is an allrounder when it comes to culinary uses. With great flavour, it can be boiled, steamed, mashed, roasted, baked and chipped. Alouette looks good, gives high yields and cooks well with the added advantage of being totally blight resistant.





'ATHLETE'

'Athlete' was taken up by

a major supermarket as

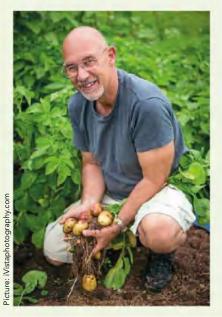
it was considered to taste better than 'Maris Peer'. The name 'Athlete' was chosen to coincide with the UK hosting the Olympic Games in 2012. It is a second early, throwing a very high number of tubers and as it is totally blight resistant it can be lifted early or left to bulk up.

The tubers are a long oval shape and have white creamy flesh that stays firm when cooked. 'Athlete' is best steamed when the skin is soft and eaten hot and is particularly good for boiling as it will not break up in the water. It also tastes great cold and is good for potato salad.

It develops good dry matter as it matures and is perfect for dishes such as dauphinoise potatoes.

LAURENCE HASSON

Laurence Hasson has been growing organic potatoes for more than 40 years and was the first farmer to grow a commercial certified crop of organic seed potatoes in the UK. He was employed by Agrico UK to manage and develop organic seed potato production in Britain. Now for the first time he will be offering these new blight resistant varieties to gardeners and allotment holders. The seed can be bought from the website www.organicpotatoes.co.uk





'CAROLUS'

The name 'Carolus' was chosen by school children in a competition



successfully bred for organic cultivation. 'Carolus' was the Latin name of the Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus who is known as the father of modern taxonomy and also considered to be one of the fathers of modern ecology.

This is an attractive early main crop with a pretty red flash over a pale yellow skin. It has high dry matter so is perfect for baking, mashing and roasting potatoes. At the open day lunch it was served as a roast potato and it was eagerly enjoyed for its crisp skin and flavoursome fluffy taste.



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READER OFFERS



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For cauliflowers from summer through to the following spring, grow our programme of four varieties with different cropping times.

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F1' - The perfect cauliflower for Christmas, sow outdoors in May or June for December



over-wintering cauliflower. Sow in April and May and harvest from February the following spring. 30 seeds

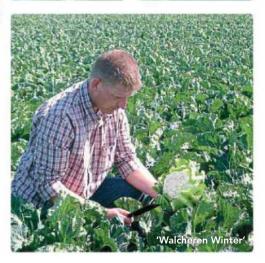
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3' - Reliably coming through the harshest winters to give deep white curds from March. Sow the previous April or May. 30 seeds

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All of these varieties have received the prestigious RHS Award of Garden Merit which means they not only taste good but will grow very well in your garden!

The 15 packet collection includes: beetroot 'Wodan F1', French bean 'Delinel', runner bean 'Celebration', cabbage 'Advantage F1', carrot 'Amsterdam Forcing', chard 'Bright Lights', courgette 'Defender F1', cucumber 'Marketmore', lettuce 'Amaze', onion 'Elody', parsnip 'Javelin F1', radish 'Sparkler', sweetcorn 'Swift F1', tomato 'Tigerella', tomato 'Sweet Million'.

Get the collection for nearly half price! Only £14.43 - worth £28.85.



WALK-IN TUNNEL

Perfect for the garden or allotment, this sturdy walk-in structure is supported by a rigid, bolt-together frame made from powder-coated tubular steel and covered with a tough and durable polyethylene cover. Complete with a wide roll-up doorway at both ends and two netted ventilation windows with roll-down covers, plus guy ropes and pegs for extra stability. Measures 3m (9ft 10in) long x 2m (6ft 6in) wide and 1.9m (6ft 3in) high.

The polytunnel costs just £139.95







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You can get your sowing under way from January indoors and these four varieties alone will fill your greenhouse – or polytunnel – with top quality, home-grown veg:

CUCUMBER 'SOCRATES F1' AGM -

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PEPPER 'BULLHORN MIX' – A lovely blend of sweet peppers. These long, pointed fruits are perfect for snacking or cooked. 50 seeds

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SAVE £3

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The Compact Plug Plant Trainer costs just £16.95





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Measures 76x18.5x14.5cm (30x7inx6in). Includes 1.35m (53in) mains flex. Full user instructions and 'Successful Propagating Guide' are included.

The Super 7 Electric Windowsill Propagator costs just £34.95

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HOW TO ORDER

Call the credit card and debit card order hotline on 0845 371 0532 quoting KG15DEC (open 8am to 8pm, seven days a week). Only orders above £10 by phone please. Or send a cheque made payable to D. T. Brown Seeds to: Kitchen Garden December Offers (KG15DEC), D.T. Brown Seeds, Western Avenue, Matrix Park, Chorley, Lancs PR7 7NB.

All items despatched within 14 days of order.

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	AGM Vegetable Collection (49220)	£14.43	
	Greenhouse Favourites Collection - 4 packets (49221)	£6.96	
	Walk-in polytunnel (42373)	£139.95	
	Compact plug plant trainer (41720)	£16.95	
	Super 7 Electric propagator (41649)	£34.95	
		Total	£

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PRODUCT REVIEWS

CHRISTMAS GIFT SETS

If you're looking for gardening gifts this Christmas for him, for her or for the little ones, you really are spoilt for choice – here is a selection of what we sampled



This set comes with gloves, secateurs, fork, trowel and a Kneelo® kneeler, all of which can be bought individually too as part of the Chrysanthemum range. The boxes show illustrations by the

BURGON AND BALL www.burgonandball.com PRODUCT CODE: GRH/SETCHRYS PRICE: £64.95



This really is a very attractive and useful set. Guaranteed to please the green-fingered.









SEED TO HARVEST VEG GARDENER'S KIT (DELUXE)

Something for all year round with this one; includes a harvest knife, a newspaper plant pot maker, a planting line, gardeners' biodegradable twine (20m), two root veg storage sacks and three recyclable plant labels. (The standard kit comes without the pot maker and the twine.)

GREENHOUSE SENSATION

www.greenhousesensation.co.uk
PRICE: £55 (DELUXE KIT), £30 (STANDARD KIT)

KG verdict

Hamper? Surprise gardening accessories tastefully presented in a bed of straw? A lovely gift for a Christmas morning.







KILNER JAM MAKING BUNDLE KIT

For that special someone who likes to make jam and other preserves this Kilner gift set comes with an eight-litre stainless steel preserving pan, a stainless steel strainer funnel, a thermometer and lid lifter, a wooden jam spoon, 12 screw-top jars and a 108-piece haberdashery jam sealing set.

GARDENING NATURALLY

www.gardening-naturally.com **PRICE:** £66.74

KG verdict

This contains just about all you need to make delicious jam and other preserves. A superb set.







SEEDLING STARTER SET

A set of sowing accessories to whet the appetite of gardeners prior to spring. Contains two paper potter makers, a patter (a double ended pot tamper that firms the compost in your paper pots) and a couple of seed tins. All the wooden accessories in this set are made from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) oak.

NETHERWALLOP TRADING

www.netherwalloptrading.uk
PRICE: £29.95

KG verdict

An ingenious way to make pots and recycle at the same time – nice thing to do with the kids too!



WHAT TO BUY | CHRISTMAS GIFT SETS



HERB STARTER GROWING KIT

Something for newbie herb growers, this boxed kit contains the following seeds: coriander, chives, dill, French parsley, Greek basil and mint. You grow the seed by simulating greenhouse conditions with the mini-compost discs and the clear plastic container. The kit also includes plant markers, a pencil, a recipe card and a step-by-step instruction booklet.

GARDEN DIVAS

www.gardendivas.co.uk
PRICE GUIDE: £14.95

KG verdict

Perfect for introducing those you love to the joys of growing herbs – a good range of herbs too and easy-to-follow instructions.







GARDENER'S HAND CARE GIFT HAMPER

Hands need looking after when you're gardening so this gift set has your hand care in mind. The ribboned Sussex willow trug comes with a pair of gardening gloves, hand scrub, hand lotion and a wooden nail brush, plus herb seeds, four wooden plant labels and a mini spool of twine.

NOT ON THE HIGH STREET

www.notonthehighstreet.com
PRICE: £36

KG verdict

Something to soothe those sore hands at the end of a tiring day in the garden and a very tastefully presented gift.







JUNIOR GARDEN KIT

This pink gardening set consists of bag, hand trowel and hand fork, gloves, two plant markers and a metal bucket. The fork and trowel are metallic with wooden handles, so can be used for real. These kits are also available in blue. The pink kit comes with rabbit and butterfly markers, the blue kit with hedeghog and tortoise ones.

LITTLE PALS

www.littlepals.co.uk
PRICE: £14.95

KG verdict

A colourful and practical gardening set, perfect for budding gardeners. More suitable for younger children.







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GIVEAWAYS

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FESTIVE FARE FOR FEATHERED FRIENDS

'Tis the season to be jolly, and to help spread a bit of festive cheer, VegTrug is giving away some fantastic products from its Tweetie range.

Launched earlier this year, the Tweetie Pad bird box and Tweetie Feeder bird table encompass the same contemporary style as VegTrug's innovative Grow Your Own beds, offering eco-friendly additions to the garden for bird-lovers everywhere.

In a choice of natural wood or wonderful eye-catching colours, the Tweetie range provides a unique gift solution for all occasions. We love the bright, festive colours of the red and black Tweetie Feeder, which offers a welcome place for our feathered friends to eat, drink and be merry this Christmas.

Both the Tweetie Pad and the Tweetie Feeder are made from 100% sustainable FSC cedar and are finished with a water-based, bird-safe preservative. Our top prize, worth £85, includes a Tweetie Pad and a Tweetie Feeder and supporting pole. Five other winners will each receive a Tweetie Feeder and supporting pole worth £45.

To find stockists of the Tweetie range visit www.vegtrug.com

We have one Tweetie Pad plus a Tweetie Feeder and pole, worth £85, and five prizes of a Tweetie Feeder and pole, worth £45, to give away.



THERMAL COMFORT FOR YOUR PET

Scruffs Thermal Self-Heating Pet Beds are an ideal choice to keep your pet warm on those cold winter nights. Available to buy direct from www. petslovescruffs.com they come in four sizes, with prices starting from £27.99.

Each bed contains a foam layer, backed with reflective foil. This layer is sandwiched between quilted polyester fibres and the bed's main fill. It reflects body heat back to your pet, keeping them warm. The quilted polyester lies beneath a super-soft fleece cover. This layer holds warm air around your pet, providing added insulation.

Scruffs Thermal Self-Heating Pet Beds are particularly suitable for pets that suffer from arthritis or that are ill, for young animals, or just for those that enjoy the extra warmth provided. The beds are machinewashable and have a non-slip base. They are available in a choice of black or brown and in four sizes: Small (£27.99), Medium (£37.99), Large (£47.99) and Extra Large (£57.99).

For more information on Scruffs' full range of pet beds and accessories, go to www. petslovescruffs.com

We have six Large Thermal Self-Heating Pet Beds worth £47.99 to give away.



CEREAL SENSATION

There's nothing like a good breakfast, particularly if you're headed out into a cold garden, and luxury cereal brand Mornflake has just launched a tempting addition to its range. Its Chocolatey Squares are now available with a chocolate and orange flavour filling for a breakfast taste sensation.

Fortified with eight added vitamins and iron, Mornflake Chocolatey Orange Squares (RRP £2 from www.mornflake.com and Sainsbury's) are a good source of important vitamins and minerals as well as being a cereal all ages will love. Mornflake's consumer panel gave them a score of 7.76 out of 8 for taste. Delicious with or without milk, you'll be tempted to dip into them at any time of day.

Mornflake has been milling oats in the South Cheshire countryside since the 1600s, making it the longest-established miller of cereals in the UK. Today its product

range includes oats, oatbran flakes, Oats 2 Go sachets and pots, and oatbran cereals, mueslis and granolas in a wide range of flavours.

Mornflake's full range can be found at www. mornflake.com

We have eight prizes of 10 boxes of Chocolatey Orange Squares and a set of six mugs, worth £32, to give away.



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CHRISTMAS KITTED OUT

Genus, the world's only high-performance garden clothing company, has launched additions to its range including clever winter accessories which will make perfect Christmas gifts for keen gardeners.

The latest additions include a luxuriously silky women's Long-line Gardening Top, the perfect partner to the Genus 3-Season Gardening Trousers. The Top is made from a warm, lightweight, silky-soft rayon and spandex mix for added stretch. The extra-long body means you won't get any chilly gaps while bending. It comes in a stylish dove grey and costs £55.

Also available are a selection of new accessories including the clever Genus Neck Collar and soft Arm Protectors which are made of matching fabric to the Top. The deliciously silky Neck Collar pulls over your head to fit snugly and stylishly around your neck. The Arm Protectors insulate and protect the gap between the end of your sleeves and your gardening gloves. Either makes a great gift at £25 each, or the two can be purchased as a special, cosy gift bundle for just £40.

To stock up with perfect gardening gifts and see the full range of Genus Performance Gardenwear visit www.genus.gs



and a set of Arm Protectors worth £40 to give away.

We have eight prizes of a Neck Collar

PREMIUM GIFTS FOR GARDENERS

Town & Country's Deluxe Premium Leather and Suede Gloves and Master Gardener Bypass Secateurs would make perfect Christmas gifts for the discerning gardener.

The gloves (£10.99) are made from ultrasoft leather and suede in two-tone colours - navy and white (in medium and large) and plum and white (in small and medium) - with a luxuriously soft fleece lining for extra

> comfort. They are strong enough to withstand any challenge yet supple enough to give unrivalled comfort, and they have an elasticated wrist band for extra comfort and fit.

The Master Gardener Bypass Secateurs (£9.99) are multi-purpose

secateurs with a specially designed notch on the upper blade to enable the user to reach into awkward shrubs and pull the stem closer for a more precise cut. They feature chromeplated carbon steel blades, a built-in safety catch and comfort-grip handles for ease of use. You'll find both products at leading garden centres, along with

a whole host of Town &



Country gloves, footwear, home and garden products, clocks and weather stations. For stockist information and to purchase online visit www. townandco.com

For mail order details call 01530 830990.

We have 15 sets of Leather and Suede Gloves and Bypass Secateurs, worth £20.98, to give away.



STACK UP THE FLAVOUR!

Suttons Seeds launched its 'Stacks of Flavour' concept earlier this year and has now extended this with its 'Crates' range for Christmas. Whether you're a would-be gardener without a garden or a gardener who wants more space, the range aims to make veg-growing possible for anyone anywhere.

These beautifully rustic growing crates can be stacked to create a mini garden in the smallest of spaces. A range of collections is available, complete with seeds or plants, instructions and 'growing menus', and the crates can be personalised, making them perfect gifts.

We have 14 Salad Days collections to give away, comprising a 53 by 36 by 9cm (21 by 14 by 3½in) crate, a liner, seeds of 'Salad Cos Mix', spring onion 'Shimonita' and radish 'Jolly', and free personalisation. You could be harvesting home-grown salads in as little as five weeks.

New for Christmas are the 'Crates' in a range of lovely colours - Natural, Woodstain, Whitewash, Sage Green, Sweet Pea Pink and Forget-Me-Not Blue - which you can personalise as you wish. There's also a crate with a slate so you can chalk up new messages as often as you like.

To find out more about the Stacks of Flavour range go to www. stacksofflavour.co.uk. To see more of the Crates go to www.suttons.co.uk

We have 14 Salad Days collections worth £22 to give away.



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GARDEN STORE

OUR ROUNDUP OF THE LATEST PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR KITCHEN GARDENERS



This 1500W log splitter from Draper Tools will work on logs up to a maximum width of 25cm (10in) and 37cm (14½in) long. It can be stored vertically or horizontally and comes with a two-handed safety operation. It has up to four tonnes of ram pressure and is supplied with a 3m (10ft) cable.

PRICE: £256.80 inc. VAT www.drapertools.com

WINDOW SILL GARDENING 3

With Microgreens you can grow 'mini-crops' in as little as two weeks on a window sill. The baby leaves can give more flavour to your cooking and be added to salads, stir-fries or used as a garnish. It consists of a growing tray and three packets of Microgreens Seeds.

PRICE: £4.99

www.johnsons-seeds.com

PAMPER TIME >

This After-Gardening gift set from Nutscene contains organic products to soothe hands, muscles and joints. The set contains a wooden nail brush, gardeners' hand scrub, replenishing hand cream, muscle and joint cream, and two mini rolls of Nutscene jute twines.

PRICE: RRP £36 www.nutscene.com



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SAFER SLICING >

Slicing can be dicey so safety is important. This Pull'n Slice Mandoline from Chef'n allows you to have one hand on the safety guard and one hand holding the handle of the base board, completely away from the blade. Seven different slicing options are available.

PRICE: £41.99 www.lakeland.co.uk



∠ GIVE YOUR BACK A BREAK

Greenman is a family business that specialises in traditional gardening tools. This digging spade is ergonomically designed with an extra-long ash handle which has been steamed and bent just below the mid-point. This bend allows for efficient transfer of power from hand to tool, making digging easier.

PRICE: RRP £38.99 www.greenmangardentools.com



∠ ON THE SLATE

These slate garden markers from Roman at Home include a Flower Slate Garden Marker; a Watering Can Slate Garden Marker; and a Butterfly Slate Garden Marker. They all come in a set of six (with two of each design), wrapped in rustic style string, with a white crayon to write on the slate to record what is planted where in your garden.

PRICE: £12.50 (a set) www.romanathome.com

WOMEN'S VINTAGE GARDENING GARB

Land Girl has a new winter range of gardening clothes in brown, giving a nod to the vintage feel of the 1940s and 1950s. Features include: padded knees, full and three-quarter length options, a secateurs pocket, and triple stitched seams.

PRICE: £72 www.land-girl.com



BELT UP! 🔰

Burgon & Ball's new poc-kit
Gardener's Utility Belt gives you
somewhere to put all those things
that you might carry around your
pocket when you're working
outside. This utility belt is made
from waterproof durable neoprene
and comes with a tough webbing
belt that extends to 127cm (50in).
It is machine washable and is
available in six colours.

PRICE: RRP £14.95 www.burgonandball.com





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WINTICKETS TO THE EDIBLE GARDEN SHOW & GOOD LIFE LIVE



We are offering the chance to win one of 10 pairs of tickets to the show!







GET A SLICE OF THE GOOD LIFE!

The ultimate grow-your-own and good life experience takes root at Warwickshire's Stoneleigh Park from March 11-13, 2016. Unearth some inspiration at The Edible Garden Show, packed full of features dedicated to grow your own. Here you will find all the innovation and information you need to get ready to grow this season. Good Life Live goes beyond the plot providing ideas for outdoor living, small holdings, travel, home comforts and more. Both shows are full of free expert talks, hands-on demonstrations and everything you need to flourish. There is already an array of top experts confirmed for the show including: James Wong, Frances Tophill, Christine Walkden, Pippa Greenwood, Mark Lloyd & more! Whether you're a pro plot holder or a windowsill wonder grower, this event will feed your passion for growing the very finest quality produce.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply enter below or enter online at www.kitchengarden.co.uk!



HOW TO ENTER: To be in with a chance of winning one pair of tickets, simply enter your details below and return to: Kitchen Garden EGS ticket competition, Mortons Media Group Ltd, PO Box 99, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6LZ. Alternatively, you can enter online at www.kitchengarden.co.uk

Closing date: Friday, December 18, 2015
Terms and conditions apply. For full terms and conditions, please see www.kitchengarden.co.uk.
No cash alternatives are available.
Winners will be the first 10 names drawn at random.

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

Only tick this box if you do not wish to receive information from Mortons Media Group regarding or relating to current offers of products or services (including discounted subscription offers via email / post / telephone).

On occasion Mortons Media Group may permit third parties, that we deem to be reputable, to contact you by email / post / telephone / fax regarding information relating to current offers of products or services which we believe may be of interest to our readers. If you wish to receive such offers, please tick this box.



Winter Kitchen WONDERLAND

Cranberry & chocolate pavlova RECIPE ON NEXT PAGE

'Tis the season to be jolly so bring some culinary cheer to your kitchen with **Anna Pettigrew's** Christmas food fest, a mouthwatering medley of carrots, parsnips, cranberries and oranges

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CRANBERRY & CHOCOLATE PAVLOVA

Impress your guests with this eye-catching centrepiece! Tart cranberries and sweet meringue come together for this impressive yet simple-to-make dessert.

SERVES 10-12

12.

FOR THE MERINGUE

- 6 organic eggs, separated
- 300g (10½oz) caster sugar
- 1 tbsp cocoa powder

FOR THE FILLING

- 400ml double cream, whipped
- 300g (10½oz) mixed berries (we used cherries, cranberries, raspberries and brambles)
- 50g (2oz) dark chocolate, chopped

FOR THE COULIS

- 200q (7oz) cranberries
- 100g (3½ oz) raspberries
- 100g (3½ oz) golden caster sugar
- 1. Preheat the oven to 150°C/Fan 140°C/gas 2.
- 2. Place the egg whites in a large clean bowl, then whisk at high speed until they start to form firm peaks.
- 3. With your mixer still running, gradually add the sugar, a little bit at a time. Continue to whisk for 5-7 minutes more until the meringue is glossy and smooth. Sift cocoa powder into the mixture and gently mix in (you can leave it streaky for a nice effect).
- 4. Line two baking trays with baking paper. Divide the meringue mixture evenly between them and shape each dollop into a circle about 20cm (8in) in diameter.
- 5. Put both trays into the oven and bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes until the meringue edges are slightly cracked. Turn the oven off and leave the meringues to cool completely inside the oven.
- **6.** Meanwhile, make the coulis. Place the cranberries and raspberries into a saucepan with the sugar. Set over a medium heat, mashing a little with a spoon until the sugar has dissolved.
- 7. Heat for five minutes, then strain through a sieve, discarding the seeds. Refrigerate until ready to serve.
- 8. Once the meringue has cooled, place one disc on a cake stand and spoon a big spoonful of the whipped cream on top, spreading it out to the edges. Scatter a handful of berries on to the cream, then place the second meringue disc on top. Top it with the remaining cream and decorate with more berries and the chopped chocolate. Drizzle over the coulis and serve.



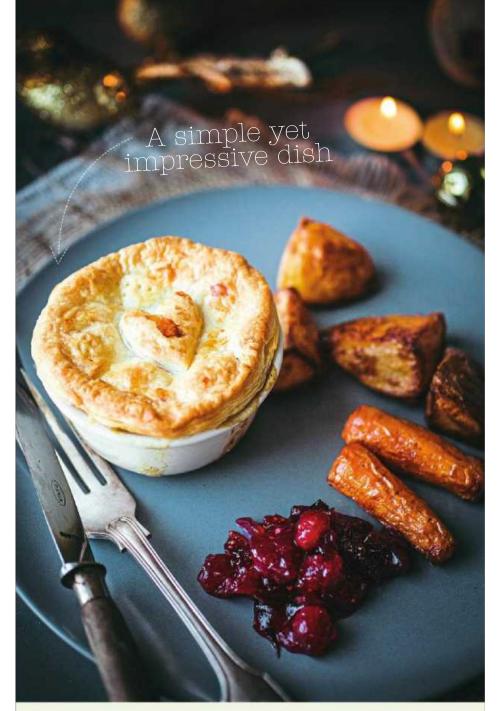
SWISS CHEESE FONDUE WITH CARROT DIPPERS

This is a classic Alpine recipe, favoured by many après-skiers, but it works very well as a Christmas dinner or better still as a special New Year's Eve meal. Use a variety of vegetables, or stick with bread and carrots for a comforting winter dish.

SERVES 4

- 1 clove
- garlic, halved ■ 290ml/½ pint
- dry white wine
 ½ a lemon,
- juiced
 225g (8oz)
 emmental
 cheese, grated
- 225g (8oz) gruyère cheese, grated
- 1 tsp cornflour■ 2 tbsp kirsch
- 5 carrots, peeled and cut into sticks
- 1 large baguette, cubed, for dipping
- **1.** Rub the inside of the fondue pot with the halves of garlic.
- 2. Heat the fondue pot on medium-high heat and add the wine and lemon juice. Heat until the wine is just boiling. Lower the heat and gradually stir in the cheeses until melted, stirring all the time.
- 3. Add the kirsch.
- **4.** Blend a few tsp of water with the cornflour, then add to the cheese mixture and cook gently until the mixture is smooth don't let it boil or it will burn.
- **5.** Place the fondue pot on to the centre of the dinner table and use the carrot and bread to dip in the melted cheese.

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Make a spectacular vegetarian main course this season with these flavourful mini pies. Delicious vegetables in rich gravy hide beneath a lid of golden pastry, making a simple yet impressive dish.

SERVES 4

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large leek, chopped
- 1 carrot, diced
- 2 parsnips, diced
- 100g (3½oz) mushrooms
- ½ glass of white wine
- 2 heaped tablespoons flour
- 200ml (7fl oz) vegetable stock
- 2 thyme sprigs
- 4 sage leaves
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 pre-rolled pack puff pastry

- 1. Preheat oven to 200°C/Fan 190°C/Gas Mark 6.
- **2.** Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat and add garlic, leeks, carrot, parsnips and herbs. Cook for five minutes.
- **3.** Add the mushrooms, then season with salt and pepper. Cook until mushrooms reduce, about 5-6 minutes.
- 4. Sprinkle the flour over the vegetables and stir to coat evenly. Cook for a further two minutes, then pour in the wine to deglaze the pan.
- **5.** Now add the stock and simmer for five minutes, until slightly thickened.
- **6.** Roll out the pastry, and cut four circles, 2cm (1in) larger than the ramekins.
- 7. Divide the mixture between the four ramekins, and top with a circle of pastry. Press down the edges with a fork. If there is any pastry left, make little hearts or stars for decoration.
- **8.** Bake for 20 minutes, until puffed-up and golden. Serve.



BEER & HONEY GLAZED WHOLE CARROTS

This is a lovely way to prepare carrots as they turn out sweet and buttery! Serve as a side dish with any main meal over the festive season.

SERVES 4

- 500g/17oz carrots with tops
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 3 tbsp butter
- 4 sprigs thyme
- 70ml (2½fl oz) beer
- 3 tbsp honey
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1. Preheat the oven to 220°C/Fan 200°C/gas mark 6.
- 2. Chop off the leafy carrot tops and scrub well, paying attention to the tops, so you remove any dirt and sand.
- **3.** Toss the carrots in the olive oil, salt and freshly ground black pepper. Place the carrots on a rimmed baking tray together with the sprigs of fresh thyme and knobs of butter. Bake for 15 minutes.
- **4.** Meanwhile, prepare the glaze by mixing the beer with the honey.
- **5.** Remove the carrots from the oven and drizzle on the glaze. Toss to coat and place the carrots back into the oven for 10-12 more minutes. Serve.



PARSNIP FRIES

Parsnip fries or chips make a delicious sweet and salty side dish for the Christmas table. Serve alongside your roast potatoes.

SERVES 4

- 750g (1½ lb) parsnips
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 5 sprigs of rosemary, finely chopped
- ½ tbsp sea salt
- 1. Preheat the oven to 220°C/Fan 200°C/Gas Mark 7.
- 2. Wash and scrub the parsnips, then cut them into evenly sized thin chips about 2cm (1in) in diameter.
- **3.** Add the parsnips to a roasting pan together with the butter. Pour over the oil, toss to coat. Roast for 25-30 mins, turning the chips half way through the cooking time until they are golden and crisp.
- **4.** Meanwhile mix the salt with the rosemary, set aside.
- **5.** Remove the chips from the oven, and sprinkle the salt mixture over generously. Serve.



TURKEY SANDWICHES WITH CRANBERRY MUSTARD

SERVES 4

- 8 slices of thick crusty bread, such as sourdough or walnut bread
- 8 thin slices of turkey
- 8 slices of emmental cheese

FOR THE MUSTARD:

- 1 red onion, finely diced
- 200g (7oz) fresh cranberries
- 4 tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 2 tbsp cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp olive oil

Transform any leftover turkey or cranberries into a mouth-watering sandwich with this festive recipe.

- 1. Add the olive oil to a medium-sized heavybottomed pan, sauté the onion over medium-high heat for five minutes. Add the remaining ingredients, stirring to combine.
- 2. Bring to a simmer, cover, and turn heat to low for 10 minutes. Turn heat off and set aside.
- **3.** Preheat grill to high. Place the bread on a baking tray and top with the cheese. Place under the grill until melted.
- **4.** Remove the bread from the grill, and top four pieces with the sliced turkey and cranberry mustard, place the last pieces of bread on top.
- **5.** Serve immediately.



CHRISTMAS SPICED ORANGE STOLLEN

Stollen can be dated back to the 1400s in Germany, and was baked to celebrate the winter solstice. It's a fitting winter treat to serve around Christmastime, and is filled with dried fruit, orange zest and marzipan.

SERVES 12

- 500g (1lb 2oz) strong white flour, plus extra for flouring
- 100g (3½ oz) caster sugar
- 10g fast action yeast
- 150g (5oz) salted butter, softened
- 250ml (9fl oz) full-fat milk
- Pinch ground nutmeg
- Pinch ground cloves
- 1/4 tsp almond extract
- 200g (7oz) raisins
- 100g (3½oz) sultanas ■ 75g (4oz) mixed peel
- 1 orange, juice and zest of
- 225g (8oz) marzipan

TO DECORATE:

- 25g (1oz) butter, melted
- 4 tbsp icing sugar

- 1. In a large bowl, mix the dried fruit, nutmeg, cloves, almond extract, and mixed peel, orange zest and orange juice together, set aside.
- 2. Put the flour and sugar in a second large bowl. Add the yeast on one side of the bowl and the salt on the other. Add the softened butter and milk and bring the mixture together to form a soft dough.
- **3.** Transfer to a floured work surface and knead for 5-7 minutes, until a smooth and pliable dough is formed
- **4.** Place the dough back into the bowl, and pour in the fruit mixture. Knead the dough, incorporating the dried fruit and spices as you go. When everything has been fully incorporated, cover the bowl with a clean tea towel and leave to rise for 1.5-2 hours in a warm place, until doubled in size.
- **5.** Tip the risen dough out on to a floured work surface and flatten to a rectangle about 45x35cm (18x14in) or so the short side of the dough matches the longest side of your baking tray.
- **6.** Roll out the marzipan to about 35x15cm (14x6in) the long side should roughly match the width of the dough. Place on top of the dough in the middle. Roll the dough up to enclose the marzipan and transfer to a baking tray lined with baking parchment. Cover and leave to rise for about an hour, or until risen and doubled in size.
- Preheat the oven to 190°C/Fan 170°C/Gas 5.
 When the dough has risen, bake for an hour.
 Remove from the oven, brush with melted butter and dust with plenty of icing sugar.



ORANGE & ALMOND CAKE

Bring a little Spanish flair to your Christmas table this year with this vibrant orange and almond cake. Its delightful sticky and syrupy texture means a little goes a long way.

SERVES 8

- 200g (7oz) butter
- 380g (13oz) caster sugar
- 2 oranges, zest and juice of
- 280g (10oz) ground almonds
- 5 medium organic eggs ■ 100g (3½oz) plain flour, sifted
- Long strips of orange zest to garnish (use the zest from the syrup oranges)

FOR THE SYRUP

- 2 oranges, juice of
- 80g (3oz) caster sugar
- 1. Preheat oven to 170°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 5 and grease and lightly flour a 24cm spring form cake tin.
- **2.** Beat the butter, caster sugar and zest in a mixer on a low speed until well combined. Add half of the ground almonds and mix through.
- **3.** With the mixer still running, add in the eggs one at a time, stopping every now and then to scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl.
- 4. Add in the remaining ground almonds and sifted flour, then mix briefly until smooth. Spread the mixture into the cake tin and bake for 40-50 minutes or until a skewer inserted comes out clean. Remove from the oven and leave in the tin to cool.
- **5.** Meanwhile, place the syrup ingredients in a small pan and bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and allow the mixture to reduce and thicken, about 10 minutes.
- **6.** While the cake is still a little warm, brush the top of the cake with the hot syrup.
- 7. Leave the cake to cool completely in the tin before removing it. Then garnish with the strips of zest. ■

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LAST WORD

As we get on in years gardening can become more difficult. Loris Goring has some great tips to help keep us gardening for longer

ost people, like me, hope as they age to continue to enjoy gardening. Few of us, however, like to admit it but there comes a Itime when the ground seems to get further away and when we bend down to weed our knee joints crack like a walnut at Christmas. Then if we get down, it's quite impossible to get up. Falling is easily achieved but dangerous as our bones seem to have the strength of spaghetti. The Government keeps on telling us we are an ageing population so we really need to defeat disconcerting ageism and make our gardening easier and safer.

The first rule is to accept that if we want to go on gardening, we should start preparing the garden well before health problems get in the way. Now, at 83 (and far too late) I am preparing my garden for my old age!

Folks that have lived with disabilities for much of their life have no doubt adapted their gardens but those of us who have been fit are now finding that the gradual deterioration of our health is catching us unawares. It shouldn't but it does. It is well worth looking up the many websites that are there to advise and help us overcome the grants available or sources to help with heavy labour we cannot do ourselves. Councils, though hard pressed these days, occasionally offer a garden maintenance service for elderly or disabled council tenants. Try the Citizens Advice Bureau where they may know of voluntary schemes that help ancient gardeners to keep their patch in good shape. Always avoid casual callers at your front door offering to fell trees, cut grass and hedges as there are plenty of criminals and uninsured people ready to rip off the vulnerable elderly.

MAKE PATHS SAFE

Non-slip paths are a priority. In addition think about handrails or hand holds in stepped areas. The risers on steps may need modifying to make them lower.

Gardens like mine on a Devon hillside pose problems that must be fixed. Slimy or leaf-covered steps, algae on decking and moss create a dangerous skating surface. While pressure cleaning is great for old solid paths, it should never be used on decking where it will ruin the softer parts of the grain and roughen it, allowing algae to thrive. If you must keep decking, use specialised non-slip cleaners for wood. Moss and algae can be cleaned from paths using Jeyes Fluid or other proprietary path cleaners. Some of my paths are woodchip bark and in the spring they are treated with Jeyes to help preserve the wood from fungal attack. I also use Garden Track roll-out plastic path made by Garland (tel: 01384 278256) which gives clean access across the veg patch. When not needed it can be lifted easily and mud washed off and rolled up to be stored. If putting in new paths, design them for easy access.

"Always avoid casual callers at your front door offering to fell trees, cut grass and hedges"

The new cage with raised

beds which are wood

pigeon proof









DOWNSIZING THE GROWING SPACE

At a time when many are downsizing their home it is worth considering downsizing your growing areas. When your birds have flown the nest you will not need the same quantities of vegetables. Flower borders can be made narrower for easy reach across them. A few areas may be stone chipped but not too many as it can make the garden look like a quarry.

My own solution was to get a contractor in to build two raised beds 6m long and 1.2m wide (20x4ft) using 150mm wide (6in) planks in my vegetable patch. Treated timber planks raised the level to 45cm (18in) high. If I had done it myself at 60 it would have been far cheaper.

There are some excellent raised bed materials using reclaimed plastic for their construction. Firms like Kedel (tel: 01282 861 325) make recycled plastic products ideal for building your own system.

Amazingly, the raised beds needed eight tons of soil to fill them after weed suppression fabric was fitted under the whole area of the cage. The paths used 10cm (4in) deep "scalpings" (fine broken down building waste) with 10cm (4in) of wood chippings on top. This provides clean, easy and safe access.

REACHABLE BEDS

For those of us who have difficulty bending down, all beds are best made to a width easily reached. Borders of about 90cm (3ft) and raised beds just over 1.2m (4ft) are ideal.

USE THE RIGHT TOOLS

Tools often need supplementing to make life easier especially if our joints become arthritic. Minimising weight is important for defeating back pains so tools using light aluminium poles help and stainless steel tools at the end do not clog so easily with wet soil and if they do, they are easily cleaned. The design of handles make them easily gripped. Peta UK Ltd (tel: 01376 573476) makes an excellent range of well-designed tools with "add on" handles that adapt old tools that help folks with hand and arm problems. They sell direct.

ABOVE LEFT: Loris finds raised beds easier to maintain

ABOVE: Proper pathways with hand holds are vital, especially in a sloping garden

ABOVE RIGHT: Nothing wrong with taking a seat to do a bit of weeding

BELOW: Roll-out plastic paths provide clean access to the beds

Wolf Garten Ltd (tel: 0208 829 8850) produces a range of Multi-change heads that can be fitted to various length handles. I find the waist-length handles fitted with a small draw hoe, a trowel or fork save a lot of bending and resultant back problems while planting or weeding.

My best friends are two kneeling seats. I keep a plastic one for my top garden but a metal folding one that takes little space in the garden shed.

THE LAST RESORT

When your gardening becomes extremely limited why not allow a local resident to enjoy your plot in return for its shared use? Allotments in many areas of the UK especially in the cities have long waiting lists for allotments and already have schemes to encourage this type of garden sharing. With an ageing population many more of us should be able to take advantage of official schemes. There are some who would happily swap a small amount of gardening maintenance in return for being able to share your vegetable patch. Mind it does need clear agreement as to what work is expected to be done or the way the vegetables are shared. There are of course great benefits as friendships develop and overcome the loneliness that too many old people suffer. Again there is valuable information on websites. Just enter "Sharing your garden" to see what is offered. In the end, your endeavours will be rewarded by fresh produce and satisfaction that no supermarket will ever furnish.





HAVE YOUR SAY & WIN £20 WORTH OF VOUCHERS

Have the last word in *Kitchen Garden* and if your piece is published you will win a £20 voucher to spend with Two Wests & Elliott. Simply pick a topic – it could be a serious gardening issue or maybe a humorous look at fruit and veg growing – and send it to

erawlings@mortons.co.uk.

Please include your name, address and telephone number. Aim to write between 300-500 words. If you have a picture of yourself or other pictures to illustrate your piece, please send these in too.

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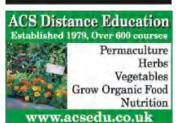




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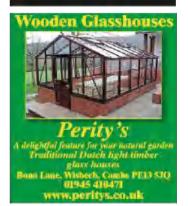
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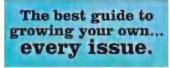
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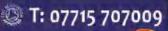


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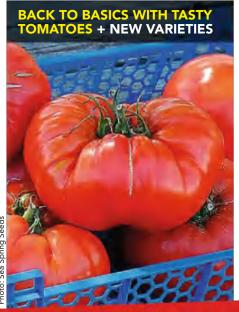


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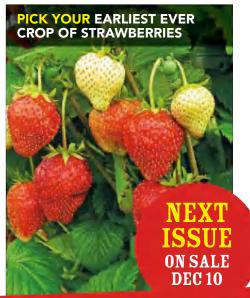
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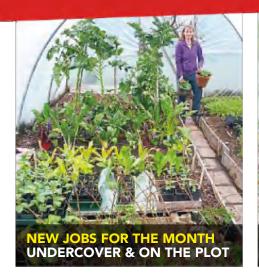


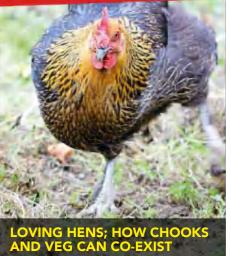




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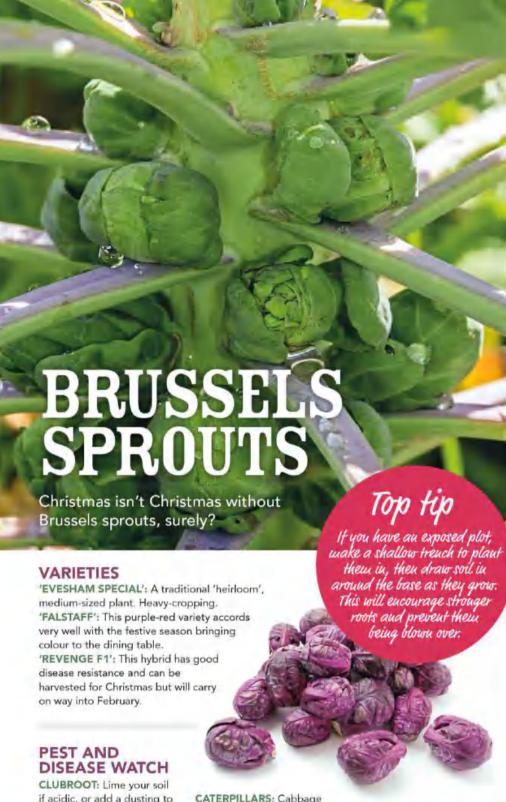
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if acidic, or add a dusting to the planting hole. CABBAGE ROOT FLY: Put collars round the base of each plant, or cover with insect netting.

caterpillars: Cabbage white caterpillars will feed happily on the leaves of Brussels sprouts, so protect them with butterfly netting or insect netting.

PIGEONS: Cover your plants with bird netting for the best protection, otherwise your crop could be destroyed.





SOIL

These proud icons of the Yuletide period require a fertile and humus-rich soil so in the autumn, prior to sowing, dig in plenty of well-rotted manure and organic matter. If you have an acidic soil add a sprinkling of lime too as, like other brassicas, Brussels sprouts prefer a pH of 6.5-7.5.

SOWING

You can start them off in March under cover in cellular trays or 7½cm (3in) pots or sow outside from mid-March to mid-April. Sow thinly to a depth of 1cm (½in) with 15cm (6in) between drills. When seedlings are about 2cm (1in) tall, thin them out to 7½cm (3in) apart.

GROWING

Once they have reached 15cm (6in), they can be planted out 60cm-75cm (2-2½ft) apart either way. Add some general fertiliser to the surface around them and water in. Taller varieties may need cane supports.

HARVESTING

Brussels sprouts generally take about 36 weeks from initial sowing. Pick the buttons from the bottom of the stalk upward when they are about the size of a cherry tomato. They tend to be sweeter after a hard frost, and don't forget that the top leaves ('sprout tops') of the plant can also be cooked.

In the kitchen BRUSSELS WITH CHEESE & WALNUTS

Steam Brussels sprouts to al dente then place them in a grill pan. Sprinkle cheese over the top and grill till cheese has melted. Add chopped walnuts, and black pepper to taste.



WINTER CABBAGE

High in antioxidants and fibre, winter cabbages are the perfect antidotes to all that festive chocolate 'n' stodge we inflict on ourselves each year. So go on and give yourself a proper Christmas treat!

SOIL

As with all brassicas, cabbages like a fertile soil that has benefited from the addition of well-rotted compost in autumn or winter. If your soil is acidic, add lime to make it more alkaline as this will help prevent against club root.

SOWING

Sow winter (and winter Savoy)
cabbage seeds April-May, though you
can start them off in modular cell trays
or 7½cm (3in) pots first if you prefer. Sow
thinly to a depth of 1cm (½in) with 15cm (6in)
between drills. When seedlings are about 2cm
(1in) tall, thin them out to 7½cm (3in) apart.

GROWING

When the young plants have five or six leaves, plant them in their final position, 30cm (1ft) apart for compact varieties, 45cm (1½ft) apart for larger ones, with rows 60cm (2ft) apart. Do this late June to mid-July. Savoy cabbages, which can also be sown for winter picking, generally need the larger distances. Water during dry weather and hoe between plants and rows.



HARVESTING

Cabbages can be cut from November onwards. Savoy cabbages are more flavoursome if you pick them after a frost. Cut at the base with a sharp knife, cut off the outer leaves and there you have it.



VARIETIES:

'CELTIC F1': A ball-headed variety with outer leaves like a Savoy. Withstands cold weather.

'CHRISTMAS DRUMHEAD': This is a dwarf, compact variety which you can harvest from October onwards. The dark green leaves have a crispy texture. A popular choice,

'JANUARY KING 3': A winter Savoy which produces blue-green crisp leaves with a red tinge. Very hardy against frost.

In the kitchen SAVOY CABBAGE ROLLS

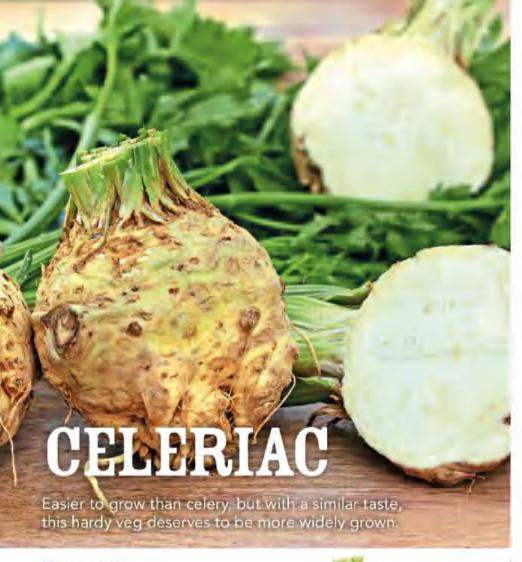
Use lightly boiled Savoy cabbage leaves to make rolls. Make the filling of your choice such as beef and rice in a tomato sauce.



PEST AND DISEASE WATCH

CLUBROOT: Lime your soil if acidic, or add a dusting to the planting hole. You can also buy disease-resistant varieties. CABBAGE ROOT FLY: You can protect your cabbages by fitting collars around the stem, or cover with insect netting. CATERPILLARS: Cover your cabbages with insect or butterfly netting to prevent cabbage white butterflies laying their eggs.

PIGEONS: These can devastate your cabbages so bird netting is the most surefire method of protecting your plants.



VARIETIES

'PRINZ': Good resistance to bolting.

'MONARCH': Award-winning variety with a good flavour.

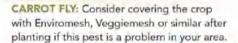
'BRILLIANT': Large, smooth roots. Stores well.

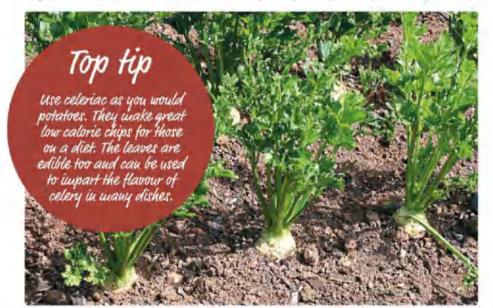
PEST AND DISEASE WATCH

CELERY LEAF MINER: Pick off individual leaves or cover plants with netting.

SLUGS: Use your favourite form of slug control, such as pellets, barriers or traps.

CELERY LEAF SPOT: Spray with Vitax Organic 2 in 1 (fish oils).





In the kitchen CELERIAC & POTATO MASH

Cut 900g of potatoes and 1 large celeriac into cubes and boil with a clove of garlic until tender (20-25 minutes). Mash with butter and a little double cream. Season to taste and serve with a knob of butter.



SOIL

Like its cousin celery, celeriac needs a fertile moisture-retentive soil. Choose a spot which has had plenty of well-rotted organic matter dug in during the previous winter. Give the soil a dressing of Growmore or pelleted chicken manure at the rate of 56g per sq m (2oz per sq yd) and rake in a week before planting.

SOWING

This crop does need a long season in order to produce nice big 'bulbs' (it is really a swollen stem). Sow in March in cell trays or seed trays filled with fresh multi-purpose compost and place in a heated propagator set at 18C (65F), If started in seed trays prick the seedlings out as soon as they are large enough to handle and move into small pots or cells. Harden off before planting out in late May. Alternatively buy in young plants from specialists.

GROWING

Plant out your young plants 30cm (12in) apart and allow 38cm (15in) between rows. Dig a suitable sized hole with a trowel and pop the plant in. Firm well, keeping the crown just above the soil surface and water thoroughly, It is essential that your plants receive plenty of water during dry spells right through the growing period to avoid any checks in growth which may lead to bolting. Keep the rows weed free.

HARVESTING

Harvest the 'roots' from October onwards when they reach at least 8cm (3in) in diameter, Much of the weight is put on by the roots late in the season and being quite hardy they can be left in the ground to develop until needed. Cover with fleece or straw to protect them from the winter cold or lift, trim off the leaves and store in boxes of dry peat or sand.

KALE

Rich in vitamins K, A and C, this easy to grow vegetable has recently gained almost cult status as something of a superfood. So why not serve it up on Christmas Day and give your system a nutritional boost?



SOIL

Kale is less fussy about soil than other brassicas, though it's always a good idea to dig in well-rotted manure in the winter and add lime if your soil is a little acidic.

SOWING

Sow kale seeds April-May, though you can start them off in modular cell trays or 7½cm (3in) pots first if you prefer. Sow thinly to a depth of 1cm (½in) with 15cm (6in) between drills. When seedlings are large enough to handle, thin them out to 5cm (2in) apart.

GROWING

When the young plants are 12-15cm (5-6in) tall, move them to their final position, 45-60cm (1½-2ft) apart depending on variety, late June to early August. Apply a general fertiliser soon after planting, water well in dry periods and hoe regularly between plants and rows.

HARVESTING

Cut leaves when young and tender from the crown of the plant as this will encourage side shoots. Alternatively, you can cut the whole plant if you prefer. Kale is a very hardy plant and will withstand much of what winter can throw at it. Tall varieties may need staking in with a bamboo cane.

In the kitchen KALE CHIPS

Tear kale leaves into chip-sized strips. Add a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of salt. Bake in oven until brown (about 10-15 minutes) with oven on 175°C (350°F).



VARIETIES

You can choose a loose leaved or curly leaved variety, or why not grow both?

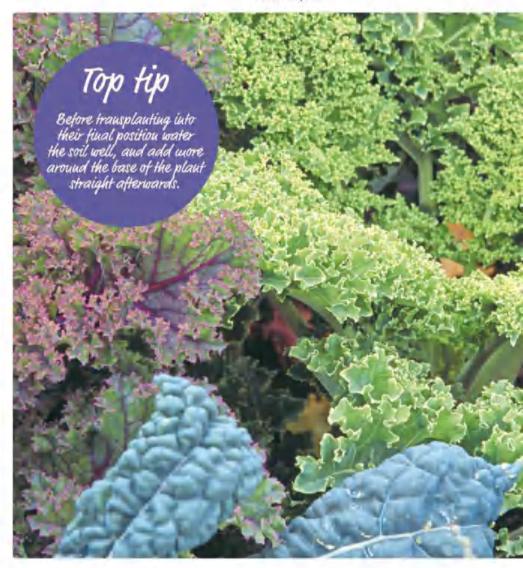
'DARKIBOR F1': This produces dark leaves, finely curled. A very hardy variety. 'DWARF GREEN CURLED': This is a good option for small space gardening. It produces dark leaves in tightly curled frills. Very hardy.

'NERO DI TOSCANA': This variety originated in Tuscany. Dark, Savoy-like leaves with a peppery taste. Good cooked but also good in salads if picked young.



APHIDS: These feed on the sap of the plant and excrete honeydew, which then causes a sooty mould. Insect netting will keep these out. CATERPILLARS: Cabbage white caterpillars are partial to kale so cover your plants with butterfly netting or check leaves regularly and destroy eggs.

CABBAGE WHITEFLY: These are a sap-sucking insect that flies up in a cloud when you touch the plant. Insect netting will help protect kale from this pest.







SOIL

Leeks will benefit from welldrained soil that has been manured the previous winter with the addition of plenty of organic matter too. The application of a general fertiliser (60g per m/2oz per yd) a week before sowing will also help provide a



SOWING

In spring sow seeds thinly in a prepared seedbed, 1cm (½in) deep in drills 15cm (6in) apart, or in seed trays.

GROWING

Young plants can be transplanted in June when they are about 20cm (8in) tall and pencil thick. Use a dibber to make holes 15cm (6in) apart and 15cm (6in) deep. Set rows 30cm (12in) apart. Drop the leeks down into their holes and then water in - there's no need to fill the holes with the soil as the action of watering in will provide sufficient cover for the roots and base of the plant. Hoe between plants and make sure they are watered thoroughly in dry weather. In autumn, earth up dry soil around the base a little as this will result in greater blanching of the stem.

HARVESTING

The great thing about leeks is that you can just leave them in the ground during the winter until you are ready to lift them. You can also pick baby leeks too before then for use in salads and stews.

PEST AND DISEASE WATCH

LEEK MOTH: These can be quite destructive to a crop of leeks. The pale green grubs of the moth burrow into the stem and leaves, causing the leeks to rot. If this happens, remove infected leeks and burn them. Covering leeks with insect netting will offer protection. **RUST:** This is quite common with leeks and other members of the onion family, and more so if the ground is high in nitrogen. Orange spots will appear on the leaves. Unless it's a very severe attack, leeks tend to get by, though crops can benefit from the addition of sulphate of potash in early summer.

ONIONS

They might make your eyes water but we wouldn't want to be without this most versatile of veg and such a long-standing stalwart in the Christmas kitchen

SOIL

Onions can be sown either from seeds or 'sets' (immature bulbs). They do best in a sunny, sheltered spot that has well-draining, fertile soil. Add well-rotted compost a few months previously but do not sow into freshly manured soil.

SOWING FROM SEED

Seeds can be sown January to
February indoors in modular trays
for transplanting in March/April,
though to get them started you will
need to maintain a temperature of 15°C
(60°F). Otherwise, they can be sown thinly
outside directly in March/April. Water compost
or soil then sow seeds 1cm (½in) deep which
can be later thinned out to 10cm (4in) apart
with 23cm (9in) between rows when the
seedlings start to establish themselves.

SOWING FROM SETS

A less fiddly alternative is to grow from sets. These too need to be planted 10cm (4in) apart and 23cm (9in) between rows with the tips of the bulb just showing above the soil. Overwintering varieties can be planted in autumn; otherwise March to April is fine.

GROWING

Onions are great because they need very little maintenance once they're established, apart from watering during dry spells and regular weeding. It's a good idea to mulch around the plants to keep down weeds and retain moisture

in the soil.

HARVESTING

Onions will be ready June to August, when the bulbs have swelled and the stalks have started to turn yellow and bend over. At this stage, move soil away from the base of the bulbs to expose them to the sun and then leave them for a couple of weeks to let the stalks dry out. Then ease them out of the ground gently with a fork. Leave them to dry out on wooden trays for a couple of weeks, outside if possible, and then rub off any excess soil. Tie or weave the stalks together and hang in a cool, dry shed or similar.

Top tip Cut off the top papery skiu of bulbs before planting to make them less obvious for birds to pick at

VARIETIES

'BEDFORDSHIRE CHAMPION': A very popular variety with a reputation for heavy cropping. One to grow from seed.

'SENSHYU': One for autumn planting, this Japanese variety produces flatbottomed, straw-coloured bulbs for harvesting in late June onwards. 'PARIS SILVERSKIN': This small, very white onion is grown from seed. Good

'PARIS SILVERSKIN': This small, very white onion is grown from seed. Good for pickling in time for Christmas snacking. Fast-growing.

IN the Kitchen ONION SOUP STARTER

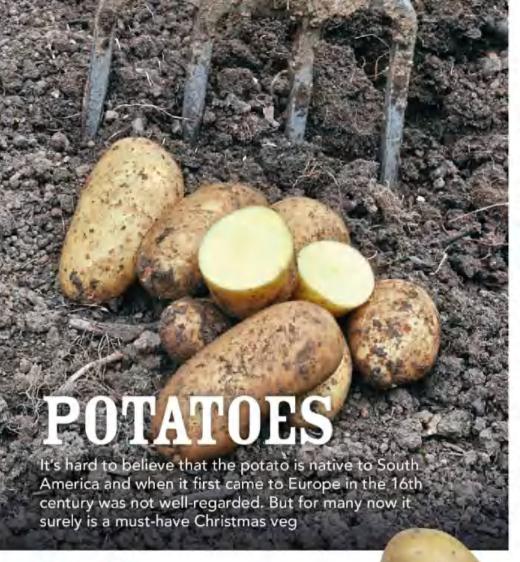
Fry onions gently in butter till soft; add 1 tsp of sugar till onions are caramelised. Add chopped garlic then continue to cook, adding 2 tbsp of flour first followed by 250ml (8½fl oz) white wine and one litre of beef stock, stirring all the time. Serve with toast and melted cheese (optional).



PEST AND DISEASE WATCH

ONION WHITE ROT: This disease is pretty devastating, showing itself as a fluffy white fungal growth with distinctive dark bits within it around the base of the bulb. If this happens, you shouldn't grow any members of the onion family in this same place for at least five years, or even more.

ONION FLY: Little maggots will burrow into the bulbs which will cause the stalk to wilt, and eventually the whole plant will rot. Covering your plants with insect netting is one form of protection as is crop rotation to prevent an accumulation of the pest year on year.



VARIETIES

'SARPO MIRA': This late maincrop variety is blight resistant, gives high yields and stores well. 'CARA': Good blight resistance, producing redeyed tubers. Good for roasting. 'CHARLOTTE': Yellow-skinned, waxy second early does well in containers. This variety can be harvested in December if planted in August.

NEW POTATOES FOR CHRISTMAS

If you want new potatoes for Christmas, in August you can plant a first or second early variety in a container 30cm (12in) deep and wide in a greenhouse or polytunnel. Add about 15cm (6in) of multi-purpose compost, add one seed potato and cover with another 15cm (6in) of compost. Water in. As the haulms come up keep covering with more compost until you have reached to within 2.5cm (1in) of the top. Flowering is a sign that the tubers are ready but have a root around with your hands too before emptying the container.

Top tip Help retain moisture around your plants in covering the soil with grass clippings as a mulch



Potatoes like a sunny position in a fertile soil which has benefited from a good digging-in of well-rotted manure in the autumn or winter prior to planting. For Christmas potatoes a 'maincrop' (rather than 'first early' or 'second early') variety should be planted in the latter half of April and harvested September-October for storing over winter.

SOWING

Potatoes are grown from 'seed' potatoes which can be bought online or from garden centres. Sow 38cm (15in) apart, in rows 75cm (30in) apart, and in trenches 13-15cm (5-6in) deep. Make sure you plant with the 'eye' (littleindentations in the potato) facing upwards as best you can.

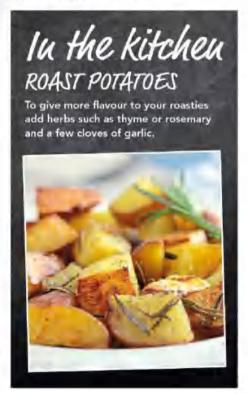
GROWING

When the stems are about 23cm (9in) in height, earth up the soil around them by drawing soil from between the rows over the haulms for stems). However, do watch out for late frosts and cover your plants with horticultural fleece if cold weather is forecast. Frost will blacken the foliage of your plants and seriously set them back.

Continue to earth up around your plants until the ridge is about 25cm (10in) high. Water regularly, especially in dry spells, to prevent scab forming on your tubers (the potatoes).

HARVESTING

When the foliage has died back on your plants, it's time to harvest. Dig up your potatoes with a fork or dig deep at a 45° angle with the aim of lifting the tubers from beneath rather than slicing through them. Rub off any soil and leave them to dry for a few hours. After this they can be stored in paper or hessian sacks.



PEST AND DISEASE WATCH

BLIGHT: This fungal disease, more prevalent in wet and warm summers, is usually devastating. The leaves will turn brown and spread downwards, ultimately causing the tubers to rot. A good range of blight-resistant varieties are currently available.

POTATO BLACKLEG: This is another fungal disease which causes stems to turn black and rot. Infected foliage should be removed and burned. SCAB: Scabs form on the skin of the potatoes, but are usually only skin deep. The tubers are still edible

but a bit unsightly. Avoid lime.

SPINACH

Rich in Vitamin K (which is good for bones) and iron, spinach is considered something of a wonder veg which is relatively easy to grow.

SOIL

Spinach really needs a well-manured soil rich in organic matter which will therefore retain moisture well. If your soil is acidic, add lime to increase alkalinity, and add

a general fertiliser a couple of weeks before sowing.

SOWING

Sow winter spinach
July-September
direct into the place it
is to grow. Sow thinly to a
depth of 2cm (1in) in rows 30cm
(12in) apart. As soon as the seedlings are large
enough to handle thin to 7.5cm (3in) – these

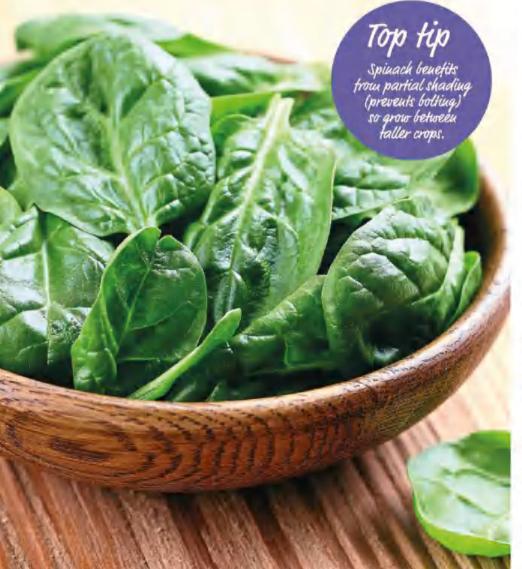
can be used as baby leaves for salads.

GROWING

Spinach will benefit from regular
watering, especially during
dry weather. Weeding
will improve ventilation
around the plants and
help prevent fungal
diseases such as downy
mildew. Give a high
nitrogen liquid feed (such
as nettle teal) once the
plants are established.

HARVESTING

Winter spinach can be harvested as a baby leaf at 5cm (2in), as a cutand-come vegetable at 10cm (4in), or as a whole plant October-January. Depending on how severe the winter is, you may need to cover your plants with a cloche or fleece.



VARIETIES

'GIANT WINTER': The leaves of this variety are large and dark green. This is a very hardy type and can be left in the ground until ready for picking.

'PERPETUAL' (SPINACH BEET): Good resistance to bolting. A prolific and hardy variety.

'TIRZA': Thick green leaves, with good disease resistance. Fine as baby leaf or cooked.

In the kitchen BAKED PASTA WITH SPINACH

If you fancy a vegetarian option for your Christmas dinner try this one. Boil 100g (3½ oz) pasta shells in salted water until al dente. Boil 250g (8oz) spinach in shallow water till soft (a few minutes). Whisk three eggs, a cup of breadcrumbs in a bowl and add spinach, pasta and toss. Add a jar of creamy pasta sauce to bottom of baking dish, add pasta mix and add the other half of pasta sauce over the top. Add grated cheese and bake in oven (180°C/Gas 4) for 45 minutes until light brown.



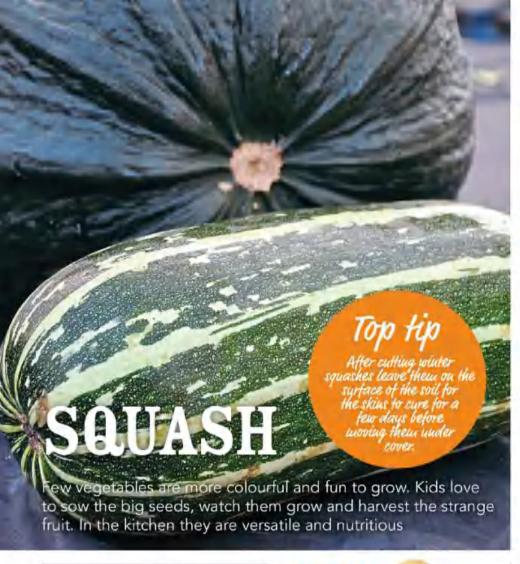
PEST AND DISEASE WATCH

preferred deterrent.

BOLTING: An infrequent watering regimen will cause plants to bolt (send up flower shoots), so water regularly, especially in dry spells.

DOWNY MILDEW: The leaves will develop discoloured patches with a grey mould on the underside. To prevent this, provide adequate ventilation so don't sow your plants too close together and weed regularly.

SLUGS: Young plants can be ravaged by slugs so offer them some protection with your



In the kitchen PUMPKIN WEDGES

The sweet taste of pumpkin adds a lovely contrast to a traditional Christmas dinner and is the perfect partner for your roasted potatoes and parsnips. Begin by cutting the pumpkin into wedges or chips, sprinkle with a little vegetable, olive or rapeseed oil, plus a little cumin and mustard powder to add spice. Add some freshly picked, chopped rosemary and mix well to thoroughly coat the wedges. Roast in a preheated oven at 180C (350F) for 45 minutes or until cooked, turning once or twice.



VARIETIES PUMPKIN 'DILL'S ATLANTIC GIANT' The

one to use for that record-

breaker - but

bear in mind the record stands at well over 2000lb! (Picture below.)

COURGETTE 'ONE BALL': Distinctive round yellow fruit. Very heavy yielding and ideal for stuffing.

MARROW 'TABLE DAINTY': Small fruits that are more manageable than some of the large fruited types.

BUTTERNUT 'BARBARA BUTTERNUT F1': Unusual large, striped fruit with a very small seed cavity and tasty, orange flesh.



SOIL

Squashes are greedy feeders and require a deep, moist, fertile soil, so dig in plenty of well-rotted farmyard manure or garden compost in the autumn before planting. Then, a week before the young plants are planted out into their final positions, apply two good handfuls of general fertiliser and rake in well.

Squashes are tender plants and will not tolerate frost. Get them off to a good start by sowing in April in individual pots, one seed per pot, filled with multi-purpose or sowing compost. Place in a heated propagator set at 18C (65F) and cover until germinated.

Uncover as they emerge and reduce the heat to 10-15C (50-60F). Give the plants as much light as possible and depending on type you may wish to give each plant a short cane - i.e. for climbing squashes such as cucumbers and melons.

GROWING

Your plants can be planted out once all frosts are over and they have been hardened off thoroughly for a week to 10 days to acclimatise them to outdoor conditions. Plant on a mound of 50:50 soil and more well-rotted manure or garden compost. Plants grow rapidly and may require regular watering during dry spells, also regular feeding using a high potash tomato feed throughout the season.

HARVESTING

The fruit of summer squashes such as ridge cucumbers and courgettes should be ready to harvest in as little as three weeks after planting with marrows and spaghetti squash following closely behind. Winter squashes such as pumpkins, Turk's turban and butternut squashes can be harvested in September and October and stored for many months.

PEST AND DISEASE WATCH

SLUG5 & SNAILS: These pests love to nibble at the plants and developing fruit from under the dense canopy of foliage. Use your favourite form of slug control to keep them in check.

STEM ROT: The base of the stem of all types is vulnerable to rotting so keeping this part as dry as possible and also undamaged is essential. Take care when tying the stems of climbing types not to damage the stems.

POWDERY MILDEW: All squashes are vulnerable to this disease and will often suffer attacks late in the season. Plants are especially vulnerable if dry during the summer and should never be allowed to wilt. Maintain watering and remove badly affected leaves promptly and spray with a mixture of 30:70 milk to water as a preventative every 10 days before the first sign of damage.

CARROTS

The humble carrot is a real favourite so no Christmas dinner is complete without a dish of these. Later sown ones can produce carrots for autumn and with correct storage will provide tasty roots for the Christmas period.

SOIL

Carrots like a good well-drained soil and a sunny site. Avoid growing in heavy clay or very stony soil. A raised bed or pot may be better if you have these conditions. Avoid sowing carrots on land that has recently had manure applied as this may cause forking.

SOWING

Carrots can be sown from March in the south but April onwards is best for most areas. Sow 13mm (½in) deep in rows about 30cm (12in) apart. Sow reasonably thinly about 5mm between seeds. This just allows for some losses but also means you don't have to thin the seedlings out so much. Late sowings in July to early August should provide carrots for the Christmas table.

GROWING ON

We can occasionally get dry springs in some parts of the country and if sowing in April it helps to keep the soil moist after sowing to

> prevent germination failure. Once the carrots are established watering is not such an issue for carrots growing in the open ground as they have a long tap root. If growing in containers this is different. As they grow remove some carrots to leave a little space between each one. The thinning can be eaten in salads.

VARIETIES

'AUTUMN KING': A tried and tested variety that is ideal for later sowings and harvesting into winter. The roots can be left in the ground without splitting.
'ESKIMO': This is a very cold tolerant carrot so ideal for later sowings and overwintering as long as the ground is not too heavy.

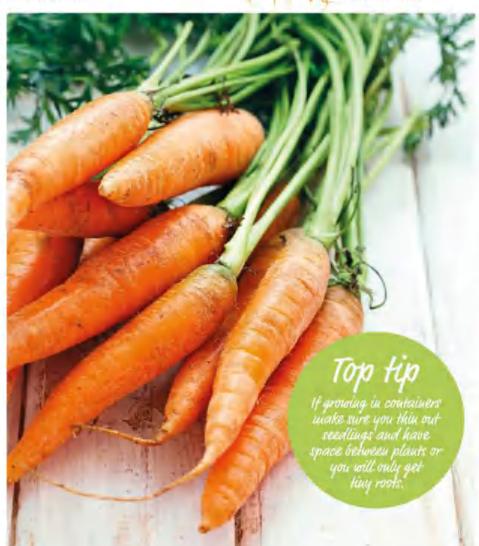
'KELLY': A new variety that has lovely long tapering roots. A good variety to be harvested in autumn and early winter.

IN CONTAINERS

Choose a short-rooted variety such as 'Parmex' or 'Mini Finger'. Sow these in large containers in a cold greenhouse or mini greenhouse in September for some small baby roots for Christmas.

HARVESTING

Simply lift a carrot or two to give you an idea of when they are ready. Late sown carrots that you wish to keep ticking over until Christmas can be left in the ground and covered with straw before the frosts start. If you want to be extra careful you could lift the roots and store them for up to four months in boxes of slightly damp sand in a cool, frost-free place.



In the kitchen

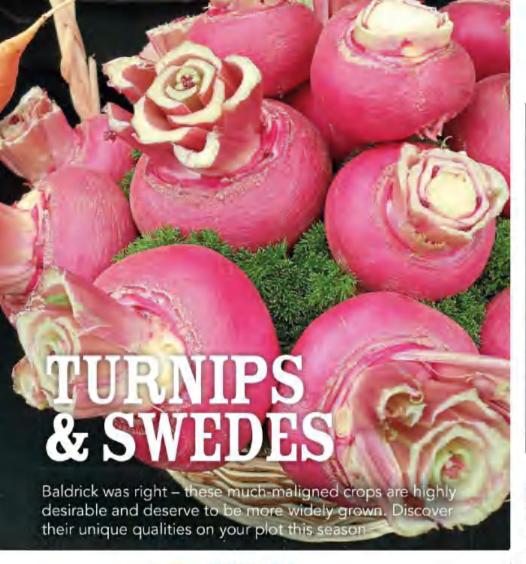
Carrots can be used in so many different ways. After boiling drain and add butter, a little brown sugar, dill and salt and pepper. Alternatively after cooking drain water and pour orange juice over the carrots and simmer over a medium heat for five minutes. Drain again and stir in a little brown sugar, butter and salt and pepper.



PEST AND DISEASE WATCH

CARROT FLY: This is a really troublesome pest and causes tunnelling in the roots and subsequent rotting. Surrounding your crop with fleece immediately after sowing is the best method of control as long as you operate some crop rotation on your plot.

SLUGS: The other main pest that can devastate a row of carrots overnight. Take precautions against this pest using your preferred method of control – a biological control such as Nemaslug or traps or slug pellets.



SWEDE 'TWEED F1': A British-bred variety that can be harvested from autumn onwards.

SWEDE 'VIRTUE': Tasty yellow flesh. Very hardy. TURNIP 'TOKYO CROSS F1': Harvest young for tender white roots for eating raw, stir frying or boiling. TURNIP 'ATLANTIC': Attractive purple-topped oval roots. TURNIP 'SNOWBALL F1':

Round white roots with tender flesh which are great cooked whole.

PEST AND DISEASE WATCH

FLEA BEETLE: This is a damaging pest of all brassicas and will nibble the leaves of seedlings, in some cases causing them to collapse. Cover with fleece after sowing and keep covered for as long as possible. SLUGS: Take precautions against these pests which can decimate rows of seedlings. CLUB ROOT: This is the most serious soil-borne disease of brassicas of all types and once in the ground can survive for many years. Dust the soil with lime and incorporate prior to sowing and avoid growing these crops in infected soil. POWDERY MILDEW: Maintain watering to deter the disease and spray as necessary using a suitable fungicide. CABBAGE ROOT FLY: The adult flies lay their eggs close to the stems and the maggots feed on the roots and young stems before pupating in the soil. Cover with fleece to deter the egg-laying adults.



In the kitchen

than turnips and are traditionally mashed with potatoes (neeps and tatties) or mashed and served alone. However they are also great roasted - try them cubed and roasted with honey, chilli and cumin and add to your roasted veg selection on the Christmas table. Salad turnips can be grated and eaten raw in salads or pickled. Maincrops are often boiled, roasted or mashed as above with potatoes. Try in soups and stews, too.



SOIL

Choose a sunny, well-drained site preferably on land which was not manured in the autumn prior to sowing. Both prefer a pH of around 6-7 and this will help to deter club root disease. Firm soil is important, so after raking in 56g (2oz) per sq yd of general fertiliser 10-14 days before sowing, firm the soil with your feet before making the seed drills.

SOWING

Salad turnips can be sown from February (under cloches) to June, but sow maincrop types for eating with your Christmas dinner during July and August.

Swedes are usually sown in May or June direct into the soil where they are to grow, but can be sown in cell trays first.

Make your seed drills 1cm (1/2in) deep and allow 30cm (12in) between the rows (turnips) and 38cm (15cm) for swedes. Water the bottom of the drills before sowing thinly, covering and firming gently with the back of a rake. Water thoroughly.

GROWING ON

Thin the seedlings when 2.5cm (1in) high allowing 8cm (3in) between each plant, then to 15cm (6in) - 23cm (9in) for swedes. Keep the rows weed free. Watering is the key to success in order to keep the plants growing and to help prevent bolting (running to seed).

HARVESTING

Maincrop turnips can be allowed to reach full size and used as an autumn/winter veg. However salad types are best harvested when the size of a golf ball. Swedes are usually harvested when fully mature, lifting as required from autumn onwards in mild areas, or storing in boxes of dry sand for the winter in colder districts.







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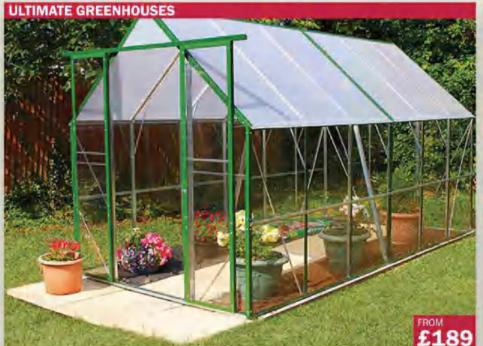


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